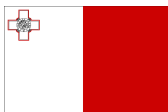


EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION 2007-2013



CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME ITALY-MALTA 2007-2013

Operational Programme no. CCI: 2007 CB 163 PO 037

**Adopted through Commission Decision
C(2008) 7336 of 27th November 2008**

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAMMING PROCESS

The elaboration of the Italy-Malta Operational Programme 2007-2013 was coordinated by the *Ufficio per la Cooperazione Decentrata allo Sviluppo e alla Solidarietà Internazionale* of the presidency of the Sicilian Region in light of its role as Managing Authority of the Programme.

A cross-border technical group was established and was composed of personnel from the *Ufficio per la Cooperazione Decentrata allo Sviluppo e alla Solidarietà Internazionale* of the presidency of the Sicilian Region, Malta's Planning and Priorities Coordination Division within the Office of the Prime Minister, members of the *Nucleo Regionale di Valutazione degli Investimenti pubblici* and the Joint Technical Secretariat. The Technical Group worked in close collaboration with various national institutions as well as various regional and local representatives from the Programme area.

Throughout the elaboration process, the European Commission's DG REGIO often provided reference documents and guidance concerning the various proposals being discussed between the Partners with the aim of facilitating the decision making process within the Technical group.

With the aim of having an efficient and effective negotiation process and to support the joint elaboration of the programming document, the following technical meetings were held in both in Italy and Malta:

Date and Place of Meeting	Agenda
4 October 2006, Catania	Establishment of Working Group for the new Programme Work plan for the elaboration of the new Programme
6 November 2006, Catania	Commencement of Working Group's mandate Analysis of the programme's priorities Coherence with the EU priorities Plan for the OP and implementation modalities Responsibilities for the new programming process: SEA and ex-ante evaluation Division of tasks Modalities for the participation of the institutional partnership and the socio-economic partnership
2 April 2007, Catania	Initiation of collaboration with the Regional Environmental Authority on the SEA
28 May 2007, Malta	Evaluation of first draft of 2007-2013 Programme Index-Priority Axis-Indicators-Budget
1 August 2007, Catania	Evaluation of first draft of 2007-2013 Programme Analysis of the context, implementation modalities, final beneficiaries, control and monitoring, financial allocations

	<p>Ex-ante state of play of the Evaluation</p> <p>State of play of SEA (presentation of draft scoping document to Sicilian Provinces)</p>
25 September 2007, Palermo	<p>Presentation of SEA to authorities responsible for environmental matters and the institutional partnership</p>
8 October 2007, Catania	<p>Evaluation of new draft programme 2007-2013</p> <p>Analysis of the context, implementation modalities, final beneficiaries, control and monitoring, financial allocations, ex-ante evaluation</p> <p>Initiation of SEA responsibilities</p>
19 November 2007, Palermo	<p>Evaluation of new draft programme 2007-2013</p>
22 November 2007, Palermo	<p>Presentation of final scoping document and consultation meeting with authorities responsible for environmental matters</p>
3 March 2008, Malta	<p>Evaluation of new draft programme 2007-2013</p> <p>Chap IV – Strategy Chap VII-X – Modalities SEA – ex-ante evaluation</p>
13 March 2008, Brussels	<p>Technical meeting with Head of Unit for Territorial Cooperation, DG REGIO</p>
15 April 2008, Rome	<p>Modalities for cooperation between entities responsible for management and control systems</p> <p>Role and functions of the Maltese National Coordinating Authority with respect to the certification of expenses incurred by Maltese final beneficiaries</p> <p>Assistance to the Audit Authority by representatives of the Maltese Government</p> <p>Verification of functions concerning financial transfer between IGRUE and Lead Partner</p>
23 April 2008, Catania	<p>Observations by the European Commission on the proposed Programme for Cross-border Cooperation Italy-Malta (2007-2013)</p> <p>Implementation procedures of the programme</p>

The said activities were accompanied, from the initial stages, by a process of close coordination involving the central administrations, institutional personnel of each of the member states and other persons who have major economic interests, as laid down in Article 11 of Reg. EC 1083/2006 with the aim of gathering comments and suggestions regarding the final version of the OP.

Four other preparatory meetings were held in Sicily and three meetings in Malta as follows:

in Sicily:

- 25th September 2007 in Palermo with the Offices and departments of the Sicilian Regional administration;
- 25th September 2007 in Palermo with the institutional partners of the eligible area, in particular with the seven Sicilian regional Provinces and a representative of the municipalities (ANCI and ANCIM) and the representatives of the Universities of Palermo and Catania;
- 12th October 2007 in Palermo with the economic and social partners chosen by the Secretariat of the Forum of the regional partners.

in Malta:

- 5th June 2007 in Valletta (PPCD offices) – discussions were held with the Office of the Prime Minister, Armed Forces of Malta and the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs focusing on the issue of “Migratory Policy”;
- 8th June 2007 in Valletta (PPCD offices) – a meeting was set with the Ministry for Tourism and Culture, the Ministry for Urban Development and Roads, the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications and the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment focusing on the subject of “Sustainable Tourism and Accessibility”; and
- 8th June 2007 in Valletta (PPCD offices) – another meeting was held to discuss the topic of “Innovation and Environment” with the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment, the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications, the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure, the Ministry for Tourism and Culture and the Office of the Prime Minister.

2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE ELIGIBLE AREAS

The eligible areas of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy-Malta 2007-2013 are the following:

- 1) NUTS III areas which enjoy physical proximity (eligible for financing in terms of article 7(1) of Reg. EC/1083/2006)

Areas in Sicily

The regional Provinces of Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Ragusa, Siracusa and Trapani.

Areas in Malta

The entire state of Malta (which includes the islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino).

- 2) NUTS III adjacent areas (eligible for financing in terms of article 21(1) of Reg. EC/1080/2006)

The regional Provinces of Catania and Palermo.

As regards the incidence of financing by means of the ERDF on the adjacent areas, it is underlined that these will be eligible for financing up to a maximum amount of 20% of ERDF in terms of article 21(1) first part of the European Parliament and the Council Regulation EC/1080/2006 and in specific cases the possibility to utilize what is covered by article 21(1) second part of the same regulation will be considered.

The Operational Programme Italy-Malta 2007-2013 concerns a territory whose surface area covers 20,209 km² in total, of which 11,664 km² are in respect of eligible areas primarily benefiting from the Programme (as identified in part 1 – NUTS III areas which enjoy physical proximity) and the remaining 8,545 km² are in respect of “flexible” areas of the Programme (as identified in point 2 – NUTS III adjacent areas).

The surface area covered by the Programme is equivalent to 77.39% of Sicily and to 100% of Malta, whilst the population affected amounts to about 4.6 million inhabitants, i.e. 83.5% of the Sicilian population and the entire Maltese population.

The Provinces of Palermo and Catania, given that they represent the principal connection points with Malta and being the areas in which there is a concentration of units with the highest planning potential with regard opportunities for territorial cooperation, are also involved in the Programme’s implementation (as in the previous programming period), within the limits allowed by article 21 of the European Parliament and the Council Regulation EC/1080/2006. In particular, the Provinces of Palermo and Catania, insofar as they are adjacent NUTS III areas eligible under the OP, can benefit from the ERDF funds by way of financing of expenses incurred in the implementation of operations, within the limit of 20% of the funds allocated to the Programme. Finally, in respect of the implementation of strategic projects the possible utilization of funds in terms of article 21(1) second part of Regulation EC/1080/2006 will also be considered.

From a morphological point of view one notices a variety of altimeter zones, with a prevalence of hilly territory in Sicily (internal and coastal) and flat plains and rocky coasts in the Maltese territory. Another remarkable feature of the cooperation area is the prevalence of rural territory and the contextual widespread presence of small-medium urban centres.

Due to its insular nature and its peripheral position, the cooperation area is physically cut off from mainland EU, (cases of double insularity also exist on both sides of the interested areas) which feature impacts negatively on socio-economic growth. In addition, one should also mention the difficulty to integrate the economic systems of the area within international markets, both in the supply of productive inputs as well as market access of the final product, due to the limited availability of transport networks.

The following context analysis takes into consideration the situation of both the NUTS III bordering areas and the adjacent Provinces of Palermo and Catania that complete the whole Programme area.

Figure 1: The eligible area



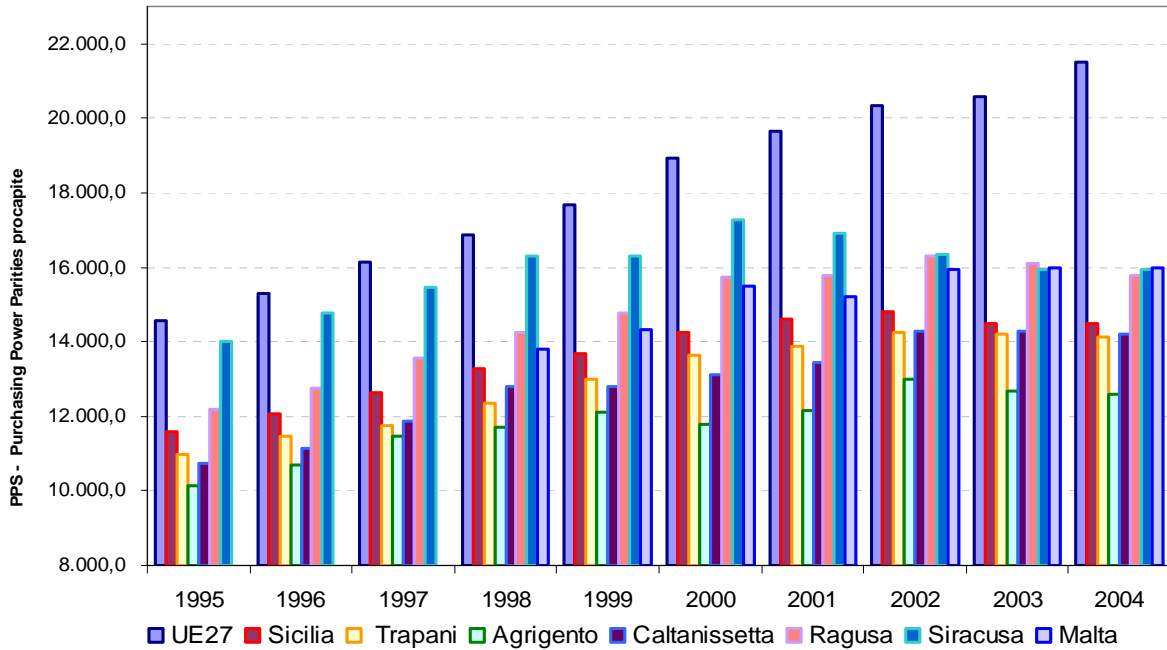
NB: The territory is not being uniformly represented.

2.2 THE MACROECONOMIC CONTEXT

The eligible area shares a condition of significant deficiencies when compared with the principal benchmarks set by the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas. The main development indexes present a modest employment demand from the productive and institutional system with regard to quality and quantity and an even lower participation rate in activities connected to the knowledge economy. However, despite such a negative context, Sicily and Malta have been showing a partial recovery of the main socio-economic parameters even if such an improvement has not been sufficient to close the gap with the rest of Europe.

In particular, in the last 15 years Sicily has registered an overall growth, which, although slightly lower than the Italian one, still shows a dynamic recovery. The new series of regional accounts published by the ISTAT, shows an average growth of GDP of 0.7%, in the period 2000-2005 which compares favourably with national data (0.6%). GDP evolution, expressed in millions of *Purchasing Power Parity* (PPS) (figure 2) and which draws a comparison with the expressed values of the eligible area, shows a slightly growing trend (except for Siracusa) and a significant variance in absolute terms as expressed by the Sicilian Provinces under reference.

Figure 2: PPP performance (Purchasing power parities), (2004)

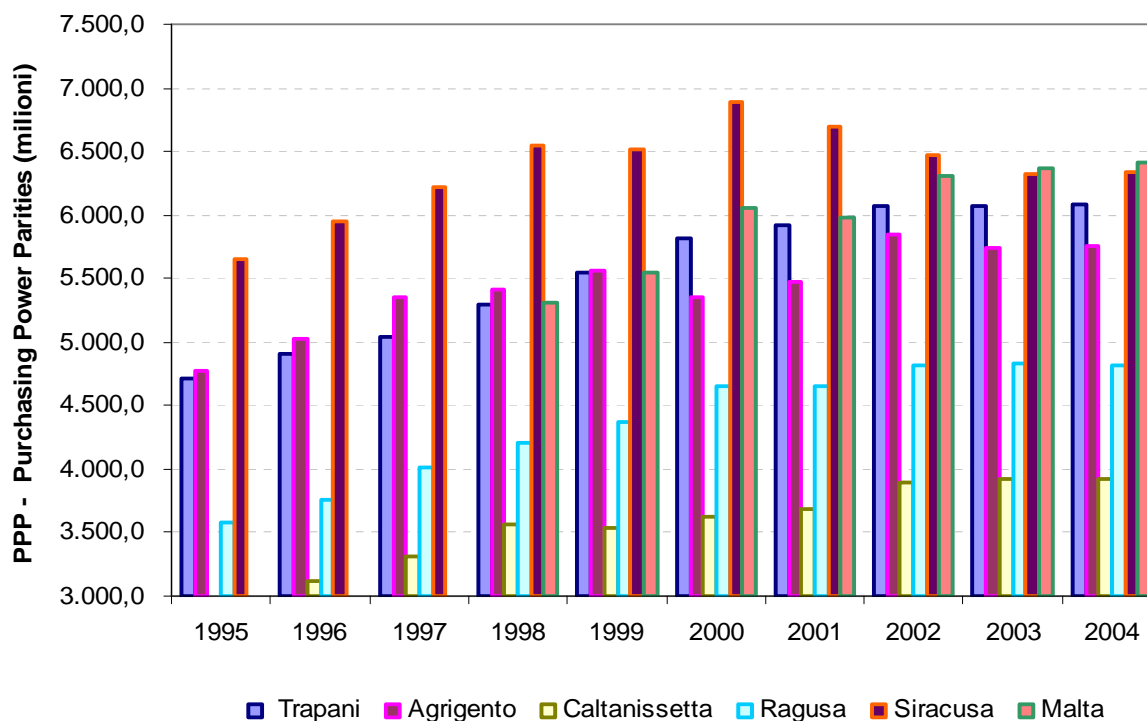


Source: Eurostat

In terms of GDP per capita (*figure 3*) during the last decade (1995-2004), Sicily has recorded a slight improvement, equivalent to four percentage points, compared with the national data, with a more sustained reduction of the gap in the 2000-2004 period, registered an increase in the GDP per capita of 9.5% (2004/1999), which is superior to the Italian average figure of 4.5. Furthermore, the new figures provided by ISTAT confirm such positive trends, although contained, with a reduction of the gap with the national data equivalent to 2.8 % in the period 2000-2005. The GDP per capita shows a decrease of the positive dynamics especially in comparison to the EU27 data, in all the eligible area, and particularly in the district of Siracusa, where the levels are lower than the ones observed in Malta and in the district of Ragusa, although maintaining themselves above the average Sicilian data.

During this period the Maltese economy has been characterised by a moderate growth, even if, this is still below its productive potential. One should consider that the Maltese economy is affected continuously on the external side by increased energy's costs and by international competition pressures especially from the emerging low-cost countries, while on the internal side consumption demand has registered a slow down due to increased fiscal pressures.

Figure 3: PPP performance (Purchasing power parities) per capita, (2004)



Source: Eurostat

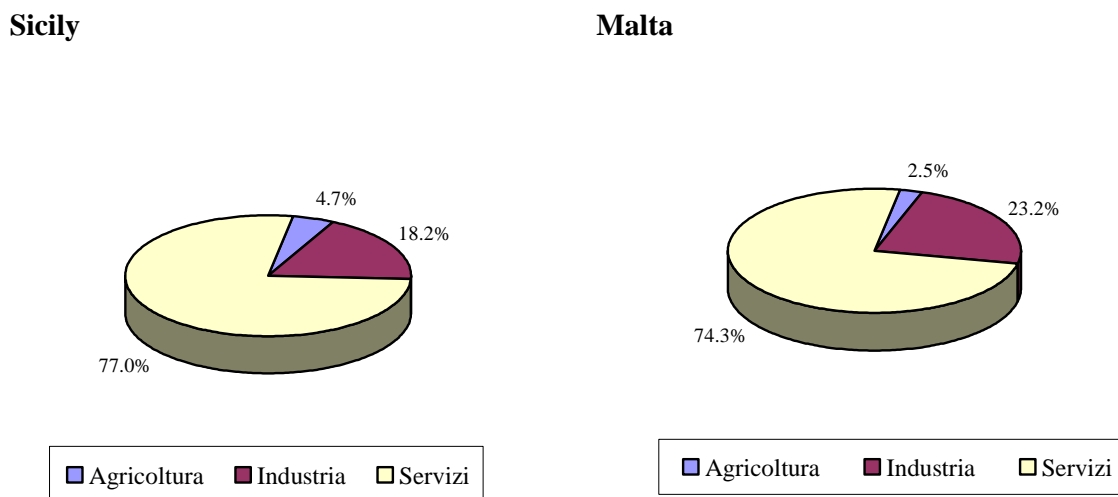
With regard to the GDP composition and with specific reference to the importance of each economic sector in the sphere of the relevant economic system (*figure 4*), Sicily shows a strong sub-dimensioning in industry (almost -12 percentage points compared with the national value, up to 2004) and particularly of the manufacturing sector, which absorbs approximately less than 10% of the whole added value, i.e. more than eleven percentage points below the national value.

At the same time, in 2004 the services accounted for almost seven points more than the national value on average.

When compared with the Maltese value added, the Sicilian figure highlights a higher incidence of the agricultural sector (4.7% Sicily – 2.5% Malta) and of the services sector (77.0% Sicily – 74.3% Malta) when compared to the rest of the economy. On the contrary, the Maltese industrial field is five percentage points higher than the Sicilian figure.

Finally, the Sicilian districts offer a productive framework very similar to the Maltese scenario, even if both present a higher incidence of the agricultural added value and in the case of the two most industrialized districts (Siracusa and Caltanissetta) a higher manufacturing vocation.

Figure 4: Added value per productive systems (Sicily and Malta, percentage values), 2004



Source: Eurostat

2.3 POPULATION

The population involved in the Programme area amounts to 4.6 million inhabitants, with more than the 83% residing in the Sicilian territory (*table 1*). The cross-border area is featured by a differentiated residential density in the Sicilian territory, compared with the Maltese one; Malta's density is 8 times higher than that of the respective Sicilian Provinces, which have an average density of 170 inhabitants per km². Moreover, due to the consistent tourist flow on the territory such amounts increase in the Maltese islands during the summer months.

The natural component of the Sicilian demographic balance does not show significant variations in 2006 on a provincial level in the eligible area, while the internal migratory component shows different patterns, with positive data in the districts of Trapani and Ragusa. Such a phenomenon contrasts, although partially, with the recent decrease of the migratory phenomenon of the whole region towards the centre-north, composed prevalently of a young and educated labour force. The situation in Malta depicts an increase in population growth sustained mostly by natural increases, whilst Gozo has experienced slight increases of the whole population, mainly due to the net return migration flows.

With reference to the residential distribution one can notice that a diverse situation is present on the opposite sides of the cooperation area. Whereas most of the Maltese population resides mostly on the main island (92%), the distribution on the Italian side is more proportionately spread in all the Provinces.

Table 1 – Surface and resident population (2005)

NUTS III zones	Surface (sq. km)	Prov/Eligible Area (%)	Prov/Reg (%)	Resident Population	Prov/Eligible Area (%)	Prov/Reg (%)
Agrigento	3,042	15.05	11.8	457,039	9.9	9.1
Caltanissetta	2,128	10.5	8.3	274,001	5.9	5.5
Ragusa	1,614	8.0	6.3	308,103	6.7	6.1
Siracusa	2,109	10.4	8.2	398,330	8.6	7.9
Trapani	2,461	12.2	9.6	434,435	9.4	8.7
Adjacent area (Palermo and Catania)	8,539	42.3	33.2	2,341,959	50.7	46.7
Total eligible area (Sicily)	19,893	98.4	77.4	4,213,867	91.2	84.0
Malta	316	1.6	100.0	404,346	8.8	100.0
Total eligible area (Sicily and Malta)	20,209	100.0	77.7	4,618,213	100.0	85.2

Source: Elaboration of data shown on the “Annuario Statistico Regionale – Sicily 2006” and data published from the National Statistics Office (NSO) Malta – 2006

On the whole, the last decade has been characterised by a progressive and sustained aging of the population, with a decrease in the young-age brackets and a corresponding increase of the elderly population.

The cross-border area is principally affected by the problem of illegal immigration, as it represents an entrance and transit space for non-EU citizens towards other, more attractive areas.

Such migration flows, in addition to the usual difficulties related to management at the reception stage, determine additional anthropogenic pressures on the use and conservation of the natural resources (and therefore on sustainable management of the territory) especially in the minor islands of the cooperation area, accentuated by the fact that they are concentrated primarily during periods when these areas are affected by a significant tourist presence.

2.4 LABOUR MARKET

In the last years, the cooperation area has experienced positive variations of the main indicators of the labour market flows. On both sides of the cross-border territory there has been a reduction in unemployment rates and an increase in employment levels.

In absolute terms, from a demographic point of view, Malta has a workforce comparable to most of the important Sicilian Provinces of the eligible area. On observing the gender composition of the cooperation area, one notices a low presence of the female component with regard to both activity and employment rates.

It is worth noting, that both Sicily and Malta have shown, during the last 10 years, an increase of the employment rates and a decrease of unemployment due to female participation, although a significant gap persists when compared with more advanced European regions. As illustrated by figure 5, one can note a gradual decrease in the female unemployment rates between 2005 and 2006 for both the Maltese territory as well as the eligible Sicilian Provinces with figures decreasing from 9% and 22% to 9% and 16.2% respectively.

Malta's socio-economic development is inextricably linked to human resources. Over the period 2000-2005, the market experienced a shift from Public Sector to private sector employment. Within the private sector employment category, a shift was also experienced from direct production to market services. This phenomenon is having a direct impact on the skills and competences requirements of the country, often leading to skills and knowledge mismatches.

Table 2 – Analytical framework of the labour market state in the territories of the cross-border area (2006)

NUTS III zones	Employed	Looking for employment	Total	Inactive 15-64 years old	Active	Employment	Unemployment
Agrigento	126,341	19,415	145,756	150,817	48.9	42.4	13.3
Caltanissetta	73,553	14,649	88,202	89,630	49.3	41.0	16.6
Ragusa	114,097	8,178	122,275	81,696	59.5	55.5	6.7
Siracusa	120,146	15,626	135,772	132,621	50.3	44.6	11.5
Trapani	134,166	15,551	149,717	132,809	52.8	47.3	10.4
Eligible area (Sicily)	568,303	73,149	641,722	587,573	52.2	46.2	11.7
Eligible area including the adjacent zones (Sicily)	673,127	125,787	798,914	743,452	102.8	86.7	30.9
Sicily	1,502,718	234,553	1,737,271	1,579,518	52.1	45.0	13.5
Malta	151,590	11,925	163,515	113,049	59.10	54.8	7.3
Total eligible programme area including the adjacent zones (Sicily and Malta)	824,717	137,712	962,429	856,501	161.9	141.5	38.2

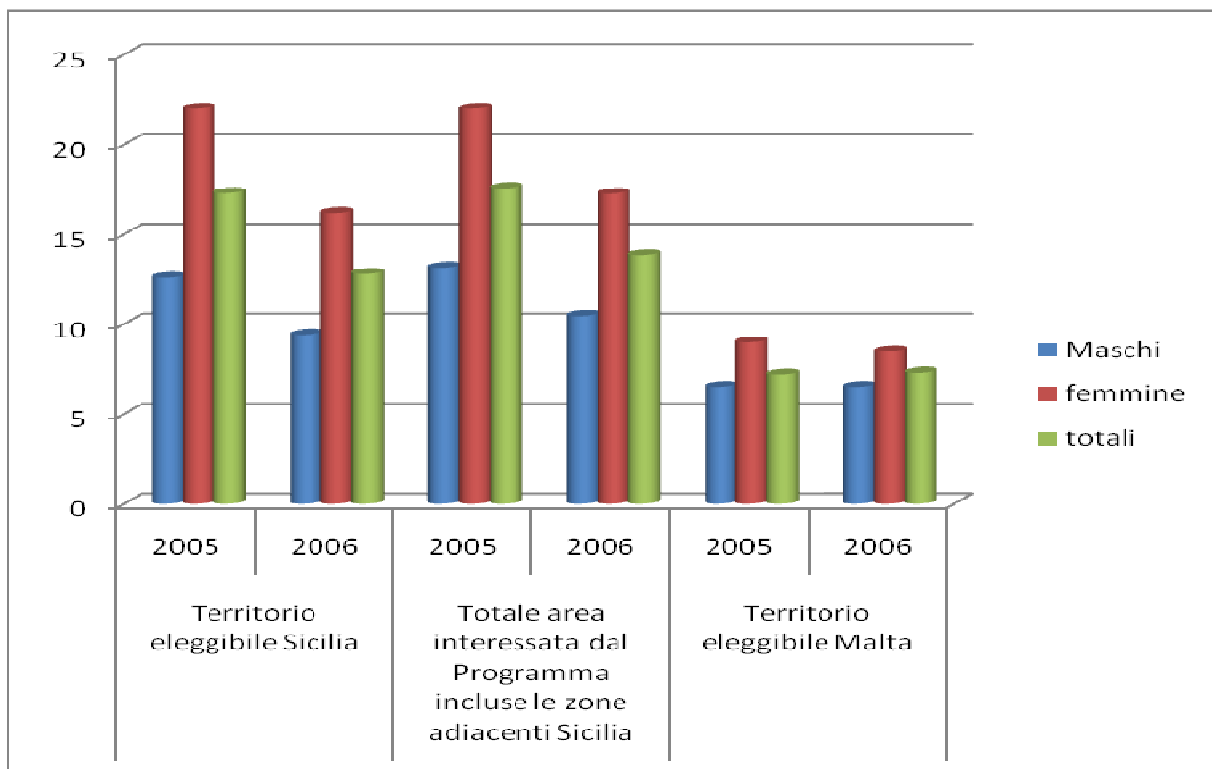
Source: Eurostat and National Statistics Office labour force survey annualised data

Table 3 – Unemployment trends for males and females between the ages of 15 and 64 in the Programme area (2006)

NUTS III zones	Years	Male	Female	Total
Sicily	2005	12.6	22.0	17.3
	2006	9.4	16.2	12.8
Malta	2005	6.5	9.0	7.2
	2006	6.5	8.5	7.3
Eligible area including adjacent zones in Sicily	2005	13.1	22.0	17.6
	2006	10.4	17.3	13.9

Source: Eurostat and National Statistics Office labour force survey annualised data

Figure 5 – Unemployment trends for males and females between the ages of 15 and 64 in the Programme area (2006)



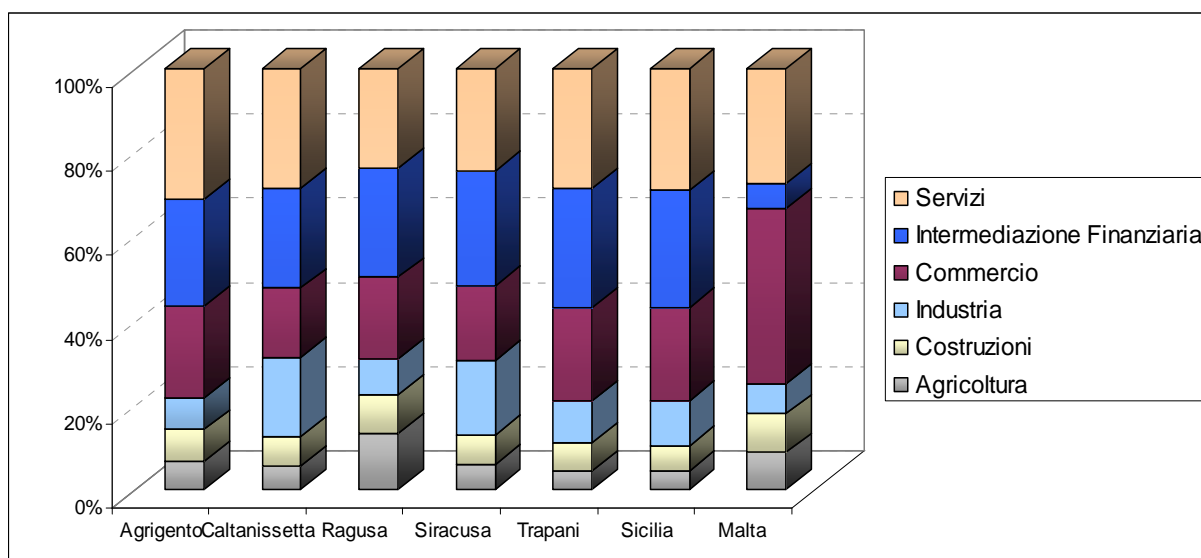
2.5 PRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

On the structural level, the industrial fabric of the eligible area presents common features, with regard to both the prevalence of small, medium and micro enterprises as well as the noticeable contribution offered by tourism and agri-produce to the production of added value (the 24% of the total both in Sicily and Malta) and to employment. Although the degree of detail provided by the statistical systems would not allow a comparison at a more consistent level of disaggregation, required for the purpose of the analysis, the strong likelihood of the Sicilian productive structure, in its various provincial articulations, affords useful generalizations and, in some cases, a comparative analysis of both sides of the area.

Regarding the prevalence of SME's in Sicily, according to the archive ASIA, until 2004 the number of enterprises with at least 20 employees is 11.6%, while the number of enterprises with at least 50 employees is 3.2%, indicating the lack of large enterprises in some important productive sectors. In the manufacturing field, the local units with more than 250 employees exist only in some sectors of the heavy industry (oil refinery and chemical industry, metal production, transports) and in the field of electrical components. From an employment point of view the SME's of the eligible Provinces absorb 99% of the industrial workers. The general framework appears slightly differentiated among the five eligible districts. In particular, Caltanissetta and Siracusa present a higher incidence of enterprises with more than 10 workers superior to the regional average, while Agrigento shows a higher diffusion of micro-enterprises. In Malta, enterprises with no more than 10 employees in 2005 amount to 92.1% and those with no more than 50 employees represent 6.1%. This clearly underlines the higher incidence of micro-enterprises.

Hereunder is a distribution of industries per economic fields:

Figure 6: Provincial profile of the industries per economic fields (%)



Source: Istat, National Statistics Office (NSO)

Analysing the extent of the productive fabric of the eligible areas, according to the ASIA archive of 2005, in Sicily there are more than 270,000 active enterprises, almost 10% more than the data of the Industry and Services Census of 2001, with a greater increase of the services and building sectors, compared with the positive evolution of the manufacturing industry. Among these almost 43% are located in five eligible Provinces. Only the districts of Trapani and Ragusa present an entrepreneurial density significantly superior to the regional average (table 4), while, the other districts, with the exception of Siracusa, have slightly superior values.

Table 4 – Active enterprises and entrepreneurial density in the cooperation area (year 2004, 2006)

Eligible Area	Active Enterprises* (n.)	Prov/Reg (%)	Entrepreneurial density per 100 inhabitants (active enterprises)** (%)
Agrigento	40,960	10.4	8.9
Caltanissetta	23,017	5.8	8.4
Ragusa	29,847	7.6	9.5
Siracusa	29,468	7.4	7.3
Trapani	44,777	11.3	10.3
Total eligible Area (Sicily)	168,069	42.5	8.98
Total Sicily	395,144	100.0	7.88
Malta***	32,294	100.0	8.0

Source: * Infocamere (2006), ** Stime Tagliacarne (2004), *** National Statistics Office (NSO)

In terms of propensity towards the export sector, the cooperation area is featured by a differentiated performance with reference to the main reference indicators. In particular, on the Sicilian side, between 2000 and 2005 there has been an increase of the whole regional export (14.9%) towards the EU15 countries and the Middle East, while the exchange with the Mediterranean area's countries still appears weak.

On the Maltese side, during the same period there was no clear growth trend, alternating positive and negative yearly results (-6.2% in 2005). Hence, the negative performance of 2005 has resulted from several factors, amongst which, the difficult international economic situation of the countries which Malta shares commercial relationships with and a more competitive international market.

In this context, it is interesting to analyse the commercial exchanges inside the eligible area. The data shows that among the whole Sicilian import and export business, that with Malta, represents only 0.13% of imports and 2.3% of exports. It is worth noting that the major flow of business is related to the production of refined petroleum products, whilst the remaining marginal share is reflected in other goods.

2.6 TOURISM

For Sicily and Malta tourism represents a leading sector in terms of economic growth and employment creation.

Particularly in the case of Malta, tourism contributes to a significant extent towards the creation of value-added to employment whilst the contribution of tourism to the GDP of Sicily is less pronounced. Tourism is one of the points of strength of the cooperation zone, rich in several tourist sites and able to satisfy different interests. Both on the Sicilian and Maltese side, the tourist offer can rely on a differentiated array of maritime resources, natural reserves, historical, artistic and religious resources, cultural and religious events, wine and gastronomic products. Through the diligent exploitation of such resources, it would be possible to attract tourist flows throughout the year.

However, notwithstanding positive growth rates for this sector, the cross-border area is facing stronger competition on the international market from other traditional and emerging destinations.

A considerable problem concerns seasonality of the tourist flows in the entire cross-border area, which affects all the Sicilian districts involved and more so Malta and Gozo. In Sicily 60% of arrivals is concentrated in the four summer months, while in Malta the figure amounts to 50%, resulting in pressures on employment and excessive use of service infrastructure of the whole area during the summer period.

A change of approach, towards the better utilisation of the socio-cultural and natural features of the area, is being done through a diversification strategy aimed at the promotion of attractive “niches” for the international market consisting of rich cultural, historical, architectural and landscaping heritage.

2.7 INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPLY

With reference to the level of infrastructure development in the eligible area, one comes across a highly diversified framework with sea and air accessibility generally considered satisfactory.

In the case of the Sicilian territory, and more so the eligible Provinces, the endowment of the various infrastructure and train connections is not of the same level as those found in the more advanced areas of the country. Internal mobility suffers from such a retarded condition especially in those areas with a high tourist potential (minor islands, concentrations of tourist attractions and coastal areas) which due to the scarce seasonal spread of flows, have to put up with considerable pressures during the summer months, thus requiring interventions to position themselves towards major sustainable solutions.

The situation is different in the case of the endowment of sea and air ports' junctions (the examination of which is highly pertinent given the nature of the Italy-Malta Programme), in so far as the eligible Provinces are concerned as these can claim good accessibility in relation to their infrastructure facilities.

With reference to the airports, there are two second-category airports (Trapani and Comiso) in the eligible Provinces on the main Island and another two airports on the Islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa. To these, it is worthy to mention, that the Provinces adjacent to the eligible area (Palermo and Catania) have at their disposal two first-category airports that ensure rapid access (approximately two hours away from the remotest areas) to the international network. In particular, from the airports of Palermo and Catania one can connect with weekly or daily flights to Malta.

In relation to ports, the eligible Provinces are equipped with 9 medium and small commercial ports (ports of Trapani, Gela, Siracusa and Augusta are part of the trans-European network TEN) and 23 marinas which quite homogeneously satisfy the requirements of the tourism pleasure craft (4 in the province of Siracusa, 2 in Ragusa, 1 in Caltanissetta, 5 in Agrigento and 11 in Trapani). The ports of Pozzallo and Siracusa have stable links with Malta.

Due to its physical limitations and a high demographic density, Malta has always given great importance to accessibility, especially the road network, sea ports and airport infrastructures, maintaining that the competitiveness of its own development model depended to a large extent on the transport infrastructure. Malta's accessibility is developed along its internal communications (mainly road networks) and external (airport and sea ports). The Maltese infrastructure supply consists of an airport in Malta, and only one heliport in Gozo; nonetheless, Malta has four main sea ports Valletta, Marsaxlokk, Cirkewwa and Mgarr that form part of the Maltese "TEN-T" network. Valletta and Marsaxlokk are the principal ports and connect the international traffic, for generic maritime and merchandising services. The port of Marsaxlokk is equipped with a terminal for cargo containers and one for oil, while the port of Valletta concentrates on passengers' traffic. It has in fact become one of the most attractive ports for cruise liners in the past ten years. However, Malta's ports suffer from the obsolescence of bare structures, which render them inadequate to satisfy an even growing demand. The other two ports of Cirkewwa and Mgarr deal with internal transport and play a crucial role for the survival of Gozo, whose traffic volumes along those of Malta have increased substantially over the last years, although their structures remained practically the same. Finally, Malta's insularity finds only a partial response in its airport structures, where several international companies operate. Malta's economic survival depends strongly on air transport services for the daily movement and transshipment of goods especially perishable cargo, an efficient mail service, and for its tourist industry (air transport accounts for more than 95% of tourist flows).

2.8 INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

As shown by the main technological innovation propensity indices the cross-border cooperation area, except for minor differences, shows a homogeneous performance, which nevertheless is far from the Lisbon's objectives.

At macro-economic level both Sicily and Malta assign to R&D an inadequate budget which is below EU average share of resources. In fact, the allocation for Sicily and Malta in the last years amounted to 0.81% (2004) and the 0.259% (2003) respectively, compared with the EU average of

2%, the objective of 3% of GDP expected by the renewed Lisbon strategy for 2010, and with an insufficient private investment share.

This low contribution could be explained by the structure of the productive fabric of the area, featured by the prevalence of SME with an inadequate demand for industrial innovation and without a sufficient critical mass able to start growth paths based on innovation.

In this respect, the Maltese scenario is particular in that, despite the low level of expenditure on R&D and the limited number of innovative SMEs, some indicators such as in the high tech products export, show above European average performance. Such results derive from the dualistic nature of the Maltese industrial structure, composed on one side by micro and small family companies, prevalently operating on the local market in low tech fields and on the other, by foreign multinationals developing R&D activities in the country of origin, and transferring technologies towards the productive branches localised in Malta.

Insofar as the territorial capacity to express innovation is concerned, a feature worthy of note is the amount of patent applications recorded in the European Patent Office (EPO), confirming the serious delay of the cooperation area when compared with the European scenario. In 2002, both Sicily and Malta recorded 11.8 patent applications per million inhabitants, compared with a European average of 132.5.

With regard to research, patent applications are the actual input of the industrial innovation process. Sicily offers 309 scientific institutions, of which 270 are institutes and university departments belonging to the athenaeums of the Universities of Catania and Palermo. Consequently, public expense for research and development is mostly made by universities, absorbing almost 80% of the total budget, leaving a very low share to the Public Administration research. In Malta there are a considerable number of Ministries as well as research institutes, mainly operating under the university's remit.

Finally, with reference to the number of graduates in the faculty of science, the average for both Sicily and Malta is inferior to the European data (EU27). In particular, in comparison to EU27 average of 12.9 graduates per 1000 inhabitants, the number of graduates in scientific subjects in Sicily and Malta, is set at 6.8 and 3.4 per one thousand inhabitants (in 2005) respectively.

2.9 CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HERITAGE

The cooperation area is characterised by an extraordinary presence of cultural and environmental resources.

With regard to cultural heritage, Sicily offers a considerable endowment, with a high concentration of interesting sites and widespread heritage, often not emphasized enough and localized in the internal areas. On the whole, in the territory of the eligible Sicilian districts there are 59 different structures (source *Dipartimento Beni culturali, Ambientali ed E.P. Regione Siciliana*) split into 9 antiquaria, 11 archaeological museums, 4 museums (civic and ethnic-anthropologic) and 35 archeological zones. If one includes the sites of Palermo and Catania (only partially eligible in the sphere of the Programme), the total number of the structures increases to 95. Among the most important sites, for their cultural relevance, is the archaeological area of Agrigento, the itinerary of the baroque cities of Val di Noto and Siracusa and the cave necropolis of Pantalica. Such sites, added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the course of time, represent some of the main attractions of Sicilian territory. The Maltese archipelago has one of the highest densities of

cultural heritage in the world. The classification adopted by the MEPA lists 1,284 sites of architectural importance and 263 areas of archaeological importance. The Maltese cultural heritage includes some of the most ancient megalithic temples in the world and a considerable concentration of baroque art. Malta has also an extraordinary fortification system, which is unique in the Mediterranean. These fortifications extending around the main ports of the Island, is approximately 25 km. A further 1.2 km of walls, surround the old capital Mdina whilst 1.2 km of fortifications surround the citadel of Victoria, in Gozo. The Maltese archipelago has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, namely the city of Valletta, the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum and the megalithic temples of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra in Malta and Ggantija in Gozo. In spite of such widespread heritage, both Malta and Sicily suffer from an insufficient protection structure and an inadequate management for the promotion of a stable and sustainable development.

The cooperation area is characterised by a significant richness in terms of natural environments and species and for a very good presence of areas subject to specific protection (tab. 5). On the whole, the extension of the protected areas inside the whole cooperation space is almost 44.000 Ha, with 87.5% on the Sicilian territory and the rest in Malta. In particular, the eligible areas of the Programme on Sicilian territory included a whole of 36 natural reserves until 2005.

Table 5: Surface area of the Sicilian protected areas in the eligible Provinces (Km²)

District	Natural Reserve	Integral Natural Reserve	Orientated Natural Reserve	Total
Agrigento	-	276.86	3,706.67	3,983.53
Agrigento and Palermo	-	-	8,414.98	8,414.98
Caltanissetta	-	258.13	3,342.92	3,601.05
Caltanissetta and Enna	-	-	1,485.12	1,485.12
Ragusa	3,766.70	-	-	3,766.70
Siracusa and Catania	316.68	225.57	7,975.24	8,517.49
Trapani	440.25	474.99	7,762.34	8,677.58
Total	4,523.63	1,235.55	32,687.27	38,446.45

Source: Yearly book of the environmental data, Sicily, 2005

The Maltese territory has 101 sites which are subject to several environmental protection regimes for almost 56 Km² circa (that are 5600 Ha) and which is equivalent to the 17% of the Maltese territory (tab. 6).

Table 6: Environmental sites, Malta, 2005

Typology	Number of Sites	Surface Area (Km ²)
Areas of ecological importance	18	29.08
Sites of scientific relevance	8	0.23
Areas of ecological importance / Sites of scientific relevance	38	15.98
Areas of special conservation	42	48.26
Areas of international relevance	34	3.31
Managed Areas	5	n/a
Bird Sanctuaries	26	16.55
Nature Reserves	29	n/a
Nature Reserves (Filfla + Islets)	3	0.17
Areas of special protection	12	14.34

Source: Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA)

In addition, the cross-border cooperation area has four nature reserves of international importance: on Sicilian territory Vendicari and Biviere di Gela in the districts of Siracusa and Caltanissetta respectively with a total surface of 1,706 hectares, equivalent to the 0.06 % of the regional surface, and L-Ghadira and Is-Simar on Maltese territory.

With reference to the institution of sites of Community Importance and Special Protection Zones, according to the Directive “habitat”, 218 Sites of Community Importance are established in Sicily, of which 14 are also Special Protection Zones according to the Directive “birds”. Moreover, other 15 Special Protection Zones have been set, for a whole protected surface of 502,000 hectares, including parks and reserves. Most of the Natura 2000 Sites are in the territory of Trapani and Siracusa.

Notwithstanding such encouraging data, both Malta and Sicily suffer from a significant delay in the management of the above mentioned areas. The four “managed” areas on the Maltese territory cover only the 0.16% of the whole surface and represent 1.3% and 1.7% of the Sites of Community Importance and Special Protected Zones respectively. On the Sicilian side, so far there are no specific management plans for the Natura 2000 sites; however, many Sites of Community Importance and SPZ, being in regional protected areas, are involved in the regional rule for protected areas and in the current planning rules.

Sicilian territory has remarkable endemism, priority “habitats” according to the “Habitat” directive, “priority” species according to the Directives “Habitat” and “Birds”, species and habitats of international importance according to the “PROTOCOL CONCERNING SPECIALLY PROTECTED AREAS AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY MEDITERRANEAN” adopted during the Convention of Barcelona. Several species of resident and migratory fauna stay in these habitats with important species of birds choosing such an environment as a nesting place.

Sicily has 14 Important Bird Areas (IBA), covering a surface of almost 442,401 hectares. Some of these areas are in the districts of Trapani (Monte Cofano, Egadi Islands, Stagnone in Marsala and Saline in Trapani, nature reserves in the district of Mazara), Siracusa (Medio Corso and Simeto’s mouth and Lentini’s Biviere), one area in the district of Caltanissetta (Gela’s Biviere), two areas in the districts of Trapani and Agrigento (Pantelleria and Pelagie Islands) and one area in Ragusa (Vendicari and Capo Passero’ swamps). Finally, Malta has 5 IBAs (Buskett and Wied il-Luq, Comino, Filfla, Rdum Tal-Madonna, Ta' Cenc cliffs) covering in total a surface area of 302 hectares.

2.10 STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The whole of the eligible areas is quite homogeneous in character as far as regards the principal descriptive features of the state of the environment. Unfortunately, their development is generally lagging behind compared to that in the most advanced European scenario.

The production and, especially, the management and disposal of **solid urban waste**, represent one of the most urgent environmental problems for both sides of the cooperation area. The per capita production of urban waste, according to the latest available data (2005), is 521 kg/year Sicily and 611 kg/year for Malta, compared with an EU 27 average of 518 kg/year, highlighting a precarious situation, especially for the Maltese islands.

Considering such data, Sicily is roughly in line with the European average; the selective disposal of solid urban waste especially for the Sicilian Provinces registers a low rate. In 2005 it maintained an

average of 5.5%, (only 28.5 kg per inhabitant), compared with the set objective of 15% for 2003, according to the ministry ordinance n. 3190 of the 22nd of March 2002 (art. 4, c.1) or by 25% fixed in Lisbon.

The unbundled data on district level present a framework inside which the Sicilian eligible districts are divided into two groups; on one side the Provinces of Trapani, Agrigento and Ragusa, whose selective collection rates vary between 8 and 10%, and on the other, the Provinces of Caltanissetta and Siracusa with 5%. Generally growth rates are recorded, on the basis of rates for 2000, which in most cases show a significant increase in percentage terms.

The Maltese experience is more positive; in fact in 2005, making use of 70 “bring in sites” all over the territory, it has recorded a selective collection rate 11 times superior to 2003, taking the selected waste’s share to 21.94% of the total.

As regards **air quality**, both in Sicily and Malta, the main pollution sources are emissions from the transport sector and energy production. Sicily records, on average, superior pollutants concentrations for PM10 and NO_x from road, air and maritime transport. On the other hand, as far as regards some primary pollutants (CO e SO₂), except the industrial areas, a clear decrease is recorded. In the Maltese islands, almost 20% of the global emissions are caused by road transport. In this field, in the last years, as a result of the introduction of unleaded gasoline, the concentrations of NO₂, SO₂ and benzene have been significantly reduced.

Energy production, in the light of a general increase in consumption, remains dependent on non renewable sources, both for Sicily and Malta contributing to a general deterioration of the air quality by far worse than the EU average.

Sicily has 71 generation facilities, with a total power capacity of almost 6,250 MW – of which almost 83% are thermal generating stations, producing a net total generation of 23,919.7 GWh (in 2005). The production of electric power in Malta is exclusively based on two conventional thermal power stations in Marsa and Delimara, property of the State Company Enemalta Corporation.

The diffusion of renewable energy sources in absolute terms is marginal in Sicily but almost absent in Malta. On the whole regional Sicilian territory there are 19 wind energy production plants (5 in the eligible districts) and 5 photovoltaic power stations, with a power capacity of 524 Kw; 3 of them are in Sicilian minor islands, with gross production of “clean” energy in 2005 of 1,186.8 GWh (including the hydro stations’ production), equivalent to 2.5% of the regional total.

Renewable energy is considered as an investment in Malta, even though practically not much has been done so far. The Government of Malta is examining several options, although it has already excluded big photovoltaic plants, and has provided for incentives to spread the solar thermal and PV panels for private users.

In Sicily the level of CO₂ emissions from the production of **greenhouse gas** (GHG) is high, compared with the total national emissions, because of the widespread presence of thermal power stations and refineries with obsolete technology. The two main energy production and petroleum oil refining plants of the region are in the areas of Gela and Siracusa, in the eligible area of the Programme. As far as greenhouse gas emissions are concerned, in Malta, although recording the lowest emission rates between 1990 and 2000, compared with EU25, the GHG emissions increased by 44%. In the energy field several measures have been adopted to reduce the harmful effects of energy production.

The subterranean **water sources of supply** in Sicily are well lined, drainage tunnels, excavated wells and drilled boreholes. Generally, there is a decrease of household water consumption for almost the whole of the eligible district's *Principal towns* (table 7).

Table 7: Household water consumption of the district's *Principal towns* - Years 2000-2007 (m³ per inhabitant)

NUTS III zones	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Trapani	64.27	65.70	65.44	64.02	63.88	64.17	63.69	63.05
Agrigento	38.82	41.87	38.03	37.82	35.31	36.73	36.46	36.09
Caltanissetta	36.84	37.24	37.72	36.90	36.82	36.99	36.71	36.34
Ragusa	68.62	70.14	69.87	65.51	65.07	59.69	59.25	58.65
Siracusa	66.68	68.15	67.89	66.41	66.27	66.56	66.43	64.43
Catania	79.76	81.52	81.21	78.99	78.82	79.17	78.58	81.72
Palermo	54.69	58.18	55.58	57.42	59.16	61.06	61.75	59.59
Malta	35.9	34.4	34.0	34.5	32.6	31.1	30.6

Source: Istat, Osservatorio ambientale sulle città (2007) and National Statistics Office (NSO)

As to the drawing and availability of water resources for domestic consumption there is a theoretical resources deficit, both for the residents and floating population and for residents only, in the ATO (Optimal Territorial context) of Agrigento, Caltanissetta and Trapani. In the minor islands almost the whole of the water supply is provided by tankers and during the summer months supplies constitute a problem. In Malta natural water is scarce because of the dry climate. The aquifers are the only source of natural water in all the Maltese islands, with approximately 20% of the total yearly rainfall depositing in these aquifers. The water quality of the aquifers is highly exploited and is subject to contamination from the soil, especially from nitrates. The aquifers in Gozo have a high chlorine level. Almost the half of drinking water comes from the soil, while the other half is produced by three desalinators from seawater.

There are deterioration processes in the **use of land** in both Sicily and Malta, because of agricultural activities and the presence of abandoned industrial areas and dump sites. Agricultural, zoo-technical, and agri-produce activities necessitate the use of nitrogen mineral fertilizers of phytosanitary products, as well as the spreading of zoo-technical and agri-produce industry's residuals. In addition, soil decay represents a serious environmental problem for Malta, because of its limited land surface. With specific reference to the situation of the soil, so far there are no specific data bases to estimate the actual state of the soil, its erosion and contamination.

The whole cross-border area Sicily-Malta is subject to high **seismic risks**. On the Sicilian side, the zones with the highest epicentre concentration are in the *Belice* zone and in the eastern zone of the territory, especially in the *Etna* area. In the area of the Programme there is the presence of volcanic structures, currently inactive, but potentially dangerous, as in the island of Pantelleria and in the seafloor of Sciacca's coast (Isola Ferdinanda), while in the Maltese archipelago the whole surface area is subject to a high seismic risk.

The **hydro-geological risk** (landslides and floods) is widely spread all over the Sicilian regional territory, especially in the areas involved in the Programme's implementation. The most frequent

meltdown typology, that is the one deriving from accelerated erosion, is concentrated in the territory of the Platani river basin, while the basin of the Belice river, is the one presenting the highest number of flowing landslides. Moreover, among the areas with the highest percentage of active meltdown, there are the basins of the river Anapo (97%) and Asinaro (86%), in the south-eastern part of Sicily. In the case of Malta, sporadic intense thunderstorms cause violent floods. Because of the lack of an integrated management system of the valleys and the torrents, the risk of floods has increased potentially creating acute problems to economic activities and serious dangers to citizens and their properties, especially in the zones of high demographic density.

With regard to the risk of **desertification**, most of the Sicilian territory presents a moderate (46.5%) or low (32.5%) sensitivity. The most hazardous areas are situated in the hilly hinterland, between the districts of Caltanissetta and Agrigento. The Maltese archipelago is also exposed to the risk of desertification mainly due to soil aridity, inadequate vegetal covering of the territory and the topographic structure of the area.

2.11 STATE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

An analysis of the state of equal opportunities in the cross border territories shows a remarkable gap between the male and female employment rate, presenting levels far below those established by the Lisbon Strategy (female employment rate equivalent to 60% within 2010).

According to the available data, in 2005, the female employment rate registered in the eligible territories of the Sicilian region was very low, compared with the national data (46.6% in 2006), especially in the districts of Agrigento and Siracusa, while in the zone of Ragusa the participation of female in employment is less difficult. The situation is similar in the Maltese area, with a remarkable gap between the male and female employment rates, even worse than the Sicilian Provinces, and considerably inferior when compared to the EU25 average.

On both territories there are also significant differences between men and women both in the activity and unemployment rates.

In the involved Sicilian Provinces the female unemployment rates in 2005 vary from Caltanissetta's 26.8% (compared with the male rate of 15.4%) to 17% in Ragusa (with almost 10 per cent difference from the male rate).

In the case of Malta, the female population's unemployment rate was 9% in 2005 (8.9% in 2006), with a less remarkable difference, compared with the male data, equivalent to 6.5%.

2.12 SWOT ANALYSIS

Territory, economy and labour market

Strengths

- Central position in the Mediterranean basin
- Increasing GDP per inhabitant and with an ample margin of improvement
- Analogous productive systems
- Smaller dimension of enterprises allows flexibility

Opportunities

- Consistent commercial developments of the ports and increasing exports in general
- Increasing cooperation with the neighbouring countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean
- Supporting networks between areas of different levels of development

Weaknesses

- Weak transport connections with respect to the Sicilian minor islands
- GDP per inhabitant lower than European average
- High incidence of small enterprises
- Low economic activity between Sicily and Malta
- Higher incidence of ageing and lower birth rate
- Low occupational levels, especially for the female component
- Excessive migratory pressures due to the geographical positioning of the cross-border area

Threats

- Progressive ageing of the population
- Greater competitiveness in the international markets
- Neighbouring territories (North Africa) offering better economic advantages for the location of enterprises

Accessibility

Strengths

- Satisfactory territorial coverage of airport facilities
- Existing stable maritime and air connections between the eligible areas
- Main access maritime ports on both sides of the area are infrastructurally well-equipped (Catania, Valletta and Gozo)

Opportunities

- Increasing political importance for the development of maritime highways (Highways of the Sea)
- Realisation of activities of sustainable mobility
- Increasing human mobility and exchanges
- Supporting the demand for transport related to tourism and goods sectors
- Development of networks through ICT

Weaknesses

- Limited development of transport connectivity with the Sicilian minor islands
- Significant accessibility difficulties resulting from double insularity of the minor islands
- Low usage of ICT and IT logistics in the ports and in port reception

Threats

- Peripheral roles with respect to the inter-modal poles of the cooperation area when compared to the principal channels of connectivity with the Mediterranean and Europe (Adriatic, Spain, southern France)
- Increasing difficulties of access to services for the populations of the Sicilian minor islands and the central parts of Sicily
- Further marginalisation of the less popular territorial areas, for example the Sicilian minor islands and the central hinterland

Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Strengths

- Eligible area is highly attractive for tourism
- High level of homogenous cultural and natural assets present on both sides of the cooperation area
- Favourable weather conditions all year long
- Competitive and dynamic tourism sector
- Presence of numerous sites of cultural interest
- Rich natural, archeological, historic/cultural heritage, with several protected areas of cross-border importance, all over the eligible territory
- High diversification of tourist origin

Opportunities

- Increase of the international demand for sustainable tourism and eco-friendly solutions
- Strong development of the maritime sector in the yachting and sea-cruising and potential for growth of this tourism segment on a local level
- Presence of common cultural identities with respect to the rurality of certain areas, to further enhance their economic value

Weaknesses

- Seasonal imbalances in tourist flows
- Placing the tourist offer of the two sides in analogous market segments
- Low distribution of quality systems tied to eco-friendly tourism
- Low usage and development of networks amongst hotels and tourism services
- Low presence of tourist information services (info points)

Threats

- Growing international competition in attracting tourism flows
- Risk of deterioration of the competitive advantages of the tourism attractiveness due to limited innovations in the tourism offers
- Risks of exclusion of certain areas from opportunities of territorial development

Research and Innovation

Strengths

- Established Universities and Research Centres that can enhance growth patterns based on innovation

Opportunities

- Promotion of experimental spheres in the areas of cooperation integrating productive sectors, environmental sustainability, governance and research

Weaknesses

- Prevalence of small enterprises with limited capacity for research and innovation technology
- Inadequate development of research processes for potential utilisation at local level and inadequate public and private research of international standards
- Low amount of graduates in scientific and technological fields
- Low amount of patent licences with respect to European average

Threats

- Loss of competitiveness of the enterprises' system
- Scarce allocation of financial resources dedicated to research as a result of bad management and duplication of programmes

Energy, Natural and Cultural Resources

Strengths

- Increase in usage and development of the solar energy
- Strong potential for the development of energy production from renewable sources
- Remarkable incidence of protected natural areas (parks, protected areas and reserves) where one can find fauna of particular interest

Opportunities

- Stronger demand for the environmentally sustainable products and services
- Stronger efforts for the development of renewable energy sources and energy saving
- Possibility of joint actions in tackling common anthropic and natural risks

Weaknesses

- High dependence on non-renewable energy sources
- Inadequate use and supply of the water resources
- Inadequate management of waste recycling, particularly in the Sicilian minor islands
- Inadequate preventive action of the natural and anthropogenic risks, in a particular, those concerning maritime accidents

Threats

- Strong pressures on specific zones with substantial areas of natural environment located in the cross-border area, primarily caused by excessive tourist presence in the minor islands of Sicily
- High probability of maritime accidents in the Sicilian channel, especially those involving oil tankers, resulting from the increase in maritime traffic

Governance

Strengths

- Previous experience of cross-border cooperation
- Development and structuring of partnerships and projects in the field of natural resources
- Potential research for joint solutions in common problem areas of the Public Administrations on both sides of the cooperation area

Opportunities

- Potential development of space aggregation on the Euro-regions model
- Potential integration through networks between areas and sectors of different levels of development
- Circulation and application of good practices and models of territorial and sectoral governance
- Possibility of experimenting and internalizing processes, procedures, professionalism and experiences originating from other contexts

Weaknesses

- Flaws in the territorial institutional governance and administrative capacity
- Major difficulties in the construction of stable relations as a result of insularity
- Inadequate integration between careers, research and productive systems

Threats

- Difficult orientation of system development to the knowledge society and the new exigencies of the public Administration
- Risks of marginalisation resulting from the phenomenon of globalization

Summary of SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central position in the Mediterranean basin - Existing stable maritime and air connections between the eligible areas - Eligible area is highly attractive for tourism - Rich natural, archeological, historic/cultural heritage, with several protected areas of cross-border importance, all over the eligible territory - Established Universities and Research Centres that can enhance growth patterns based on innovation - Strong potential for the development of energy production from renewable sources - Remarkable incidence of protected natural areas (parks, protected areas and reserves) where one can find fauna of particular interest - Previous experience of cross-border cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak transport connections with respect to the Sicilian minor islands - Low usage of ICT and IT logistics in the ports and in port reception - Seasonal imbalances in tourist flows - Low distribution of quality systems tied to eco-friendly tourism - Prevalence of small enterprises with limited capacity for research and innovation technology - Inadequate use and supply of the water resources - Inadequate management of waste recycling, particularly in the Sicilian minor islands - Inadequate preventive action of the natural and anthropogenic risks, in a particular, those concerning maritime accidents - Inadequate integration between careers, research and productive systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing cooperation with the neighbouring countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean - Increasing political importance for the development of maritime highways (Highways of the Sea) - Supporting the demand for transport related to tourism and goods sectors - Development of networks through ICT Increase of the international demand for sustainable tourism and eco-friendly solutions - Stronger efforts for the development of renewable energy sources and energy saving - Possibility of joint actions in tackling common anthropic and natural risks - Circulation and application of good practices and models of territorial and sectoral governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater competitiveness in the international markets - Neighbouring territories (North Africa) offering better economic advantages for the location of enterprises - Further marginalisation of the less popular territorial areas, for example the Sicilian minor islands and the central hinterland - Scarce allocation of financial resources dedicated to research as a result of bad management and duplication of programmes - Strong pressures on specific zones with substantial areas of natural environment located in the cross-border area, primarily caused by excessive tourist presence in the minor islands of Sicily - High probability of maritime accidents in the Sicilian channel, especially those involving oil tankers, resulting from the increase in maritime traffic

2.13 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The analysis of the evolution of the macroeconomic context indicates the existence of a positive growth trend, in terms of GDP expressed in PPP, emerging on both sides of the area of cooperation, although it should be stated that such a factor has not yet been able to impinge to any substantial degree on the whole framework, which is still fraught by considerable common structural gaps.

From an examination of the composition of the added value of both Sicily and Malta, the production element of both economic systems results partially different, with a predominance of the agricultural field in Sicily, when compared with the rest of the economy, and a non-pronounced incidence of the industrial field in Malta. Notwithstanding the existence of such differences, it is reasonable to state that the Sicilian Provinces of the eligible area present a productive framework not so diverse from the Maltese one, taking into account also the high importance of the services' sector of both areas and particularly the relevance of the economic activities directly connected to tourism.

Tourism represents the leading sector for the cross border area's economy, also in terms of employment, displaying significant growth rates on both sides, with an inherent potential for further development.

To this end, the context analysis underlines the current homogeneous orientation of the offer, towards traditional tourist packages, determining for the whole eligible area common links connected to the seasonality in tourist flows and hence the need to progressively diversify and upgrade the tourist market strategies, based on an improvement in quality standards and on the diversification of the offer. Towards this end, it is necessary (imperative) to adopt an approach which will make better use of the tourism potential more in line with the better evaluation of the socio-cultural and natural identities and specificities of the area. The development of 'niches' that demonstrate a good potential of growth in international markets and the adoption of innovative management systems, such as relation tourism, are considered ideal contributions towards a diversified tourism offer.

In so far as the structure of the productive system is concerned, the eligible area is featured by a prevalence of small-medium sized enterprises, with limited capabilities of technological innovation, as a result of their limited size as well as the scarce propensity to inter-company cooperation. In contrast to these deficiencies, the eligible area's territory can rely on the presence of a considerable number of research structures able to support, also exploiting the opportunities derived from such cooperation, growth paths that can be derived from the use of innovative methods, promoting experimental cooperation of the productive sectors, environmental sustainability, governance and research.

The eligible area has a rich endowment of cultural and natural heritage of international repute, characterised by several attractions of cultural assets in internal areas and a widespread distribution of cultural and natural sites, which are not properly promoted. On either side there exists a homogenous distribution of cultural and natural assets which at present are only partially exploited, but which have a high potential for the offer's integration. The eligible area features a similar situation with regard to the main descriptive features of the state of the environment, about which there are common phenomena which are especially relevant to natural resources' management.

The high dependence of energy production on traditional sources is common to both areas and is on the other hand counterbalanced by high development potentialities of renewable energy sources on both sides of the cross border area, which unfortunately are so far only partially exploited.

The insular specificity of the entire area of cooperation also determines its high exposition to several common anthropogenic and natural risks, which could be more efficiently tackled through a joint effort.

The inadequate management of the territorial systems of the eligible area can to some extent be ascribed to similar deficiencies and weaknesses in institutional governance and administration capability, also in the light of new challenges brought about by the ever-changing international scenario.

3. LESSONS FROM THE PAST

The Programme Italy-Malta 2004-2006 has represented the first bilateral territorial cooperation's experience, both for the Sicilian Regional Administration and for the Government of Malta which has strengthened knowledge and dialogue, not only at a cultural level but also with respect to different institutional and administrative procedures and practices.

At this stage it is too early to present a definitive evaluation, however, it can already be noted that the major result achieved was that of having permitted both cultures to get closer together thus increasing awareness of the existing differences and the need to try new administrative and procedural processes. With respect to the approved projects per measure, it can be noted that 7 out of 13 projects fall within the remit of measure 1.1 "Strengthening and valorisation of cultural identities in the cross-border area, only one project falls within measure 1.2 "Development of cross-border transport", 3 projects within measure 2.1. "Integrated management of natural resources and urban environments", and 2 projects within measure 2.2 "Development of services promoting enterprise". When considering financial commitments as well as commitments concerning the interventions that can be financed, it can be concluded that, in general, the first edition of the Programme has permitted the testing of pilot activities on matters of common interest which can provide a basis for wider and more structured cooperation and which also require greater commitment.

The continuation of joint management of the programme, which was also possible through the creation of balanced partnerships, required significant efforts to reach a level of understanding between different cultural backgrounds as well as to strengthen transparency and communication.

The intervention strategy of the programme was designed to achieve the global objective of "promoting integration between the identified Nuts II zones of Sicily and Malta and to value the resources of the cross-border area within the perspective of sustainable development". This objective was substantially reached, particularly, when taking into consideration the financial resources available and the amount of financed projects.

With respect to the administrative-management aspect, one must highlight that, in view of the next programming period, the strengthening of mutual trust achieved to date will be conducive towards the attainment of more effective and concrete results as well as greater capacity to produce strategic and transversal initiatives in the territories concerned.

4. PROGRAMME STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

4.1 STRATEGY

4.1.1 STRATEGIC CHOICES AND GLOBAL OBJECTIVE

The area of the Italy-Malta Programme presents different aspects shared by both socio-economic and environmental contexts, however geographically differentiated by the absence of a land border, leading to the drawing up of a strategy of programme development, steering on specific common policies through a significant concentration of financial resources, a strong institutional cooperation and a broad and qualified partnership for the realization of the projects.

For example, both areas – as it emerges from the SWOT analysis - have a high endowment of natural and cultural resources that constitute a territorial potentiality. Their proper use, within a framework of sustainable development, can be turned into an opportunity for growth and development for the cooperation area.

Consistently with the Lisbon objectives, these considerations enhance the awareness of the imperative necessity to promote development actions designed to preserve, protect and enhance the natural and cultural heritage, pointing to the testing of innovative, environmentally sustainable ways of management of the territory and its resources. Similarly, a significant contribution should be given to the creation of scientific and technological networks and enhancement of the research, development and innovation capacity, thereby helping to trigger off-balanced development processes in the cooperation area.

This approach should take into account the necessity to develop and apply cooperation models able to orientate the actors involved in research activities, in line with the territorial demands (e.g. tourism, cultural resources, natural and environmental resources, infrastructure).

The exigency to impact on the weaknesses arising from the SWOT analysis should be also emphasized, pointing to a strong concentration of highly innovative actions and new coordinated research projects, in order to allow the socio-economic actors and the Local Administrations of both territorial contexts, to enhance and develop the territorial cooperation's added value with regard to the Mainstream Programmes.

As far as the tourist offer system of both areas is concerned, the Programme's intervention is aimed at dealing with the fragility problems of the existing assets, thus contributing to the achievement of sustainable development actions of the cross-border area. An actual improvement of the conditions for sustainable accessibility should be made in this direction, developing integrated intermodal transport's interventions, in order to promote and increase the accessibility of less favoured areas (e.g. minor islands and inland areas). ICT can contribute concretely towards the same objective, accelerating the process of strengthening and improving the accessibility's conditions to services, particularly those provided by the Public Administration, focusing on the creation of networks of institutional subjects, research institutes and national and local competence centres. Similarly, the intangible infrastructure and the networks of enterprises can serve as a tool to improve the access conditions for small businesses within a broader system directed to the Mediterranean.

The Programme aims at giving a significant contribution to an increased and improved quality of the tourism offer of the cooperation area, through the promotion of the natural and cultural heritage and the development of sustainable tourism as an international European and Mediterranean brand. This approach should also be supported and accompanied by initiatives and actions intended to

bring about growth in technical and administrative capacity in the field of the territory's sustainable management.

The strategy should help to promote the development of skills, knowledge and qualified abilities for conservation, management and exploitation of the natural and cultural resources. The territorial cooperation, if properly addressed, can make a significant contribution through development initiatives, the extension, integration and application of tools, methodologies and experiences of integrated enhancement of cultural heritage and the landscape. The actions concerning the use of monitoring systems for control, management of risk degradation, development of management tools for poles of excellence and for tangible and intangible systems and networks of cultural resources, can be directed to the above mentioned goal.

The strengthening of levels of socio-economic integration between both sides of the cross-border area is strongly linked to the following factors: the consolidation of institutional cooperation relations among both the different government levels of the development policies and between the Institutions and the expanded partnership, as well as to the development of cross-border integrated services. The transfer of best practices and models of joint management can provide an important contribution to improve the public administration's transparency and to strengthen the institutional capability, since through joint action it will be possible to deal with events hardly manageable individually (e.g. shipping accidents, maritime pollution).

The Programme aims at achieving the following General Objective:

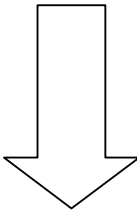
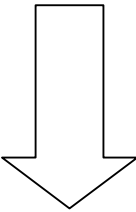
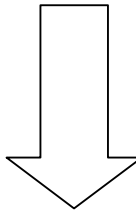
“Strengthening the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the cross-border area, within a framework of environmental sustainability”

In order to achieve the overall objective, consistently with the provisions of the European Strategy for territorial cooperation, both territorial systems of the Programme will have to focus on a joint and coordinated action that will integrate with the strategies of other Programmes involving the same territories and in respect of the principles of intervention as highlighted in Regulation 1083/2006 (art. 16 and 17), i.e. “sustainable development” and “equality between men and women and non-discrimination”. Interventions with a high socio-economic impact (strategic projects) will have to be addressed in this strategy, through an action aimed at strengthening the tourist system of the cross-border territory and at a coordinated and systematic intervention to deal with the weakness' factors of the territorial system. A strong contribution in this direction may come from the exploitation of natural and cultural resources of the cooperation area.

Therefore, also considering the socio-economic characteristics of the cooperation area and especially the limited budget of the Programme, apart from technical assistance that is dedicated to support the Programme's management, the strategic choices have been directed to two intervention's priorities.

The first Axis is aimed at strengthening competitiveness through the promotion of innovation and research, the strengthening of the system of accessibility and territorial attractiveness, in a context of sustainable development; the second Axis, is designed to produce integrated actions with the first one, on the one hand it points to the strengths' exploitation of the of cross-border area (e.g. natural and cultural resources) and on the other hand to overcome the critical conditions related to the management of risks and the monitoring and safeguarding of natural resources.

In view of the strategy that has been identified the following logical framework is being presented:

GENERAL OBJECTIVE		
<i>“Strengthening the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the cross-border area, within a framework of environmental sustainability”</i>		
PRIORITY AXES		
<i>PRIORITY AXIS I</i> COMPETITIVENESS: Research and Innovation; Sustainable Development	<i>PRIORITY AXIS II</i> ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY and RISK PREVENTION	<i>PRIORITY AXIS III</i> TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AWARENESS, COMMUNICATION and PUBLICITY
		
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES		
1.1. Supporting research and innovation in order to promote sustainable development paths	2.1 Contributing to the protection of the environment through the safeguarding, valorisation and monitoring of natural resources	3.1. Ensuring actions to support the Programme’s implementation, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the management and surveillance system of the OP
1.2. Improving cross-border accessibility and reinforcing transport systems that are more environmentally friendly	2.2. Contributing to the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency	
1.3. Contributing to the improvement of the integrated tourist offer in the cross-border area	2.3. Promoting joint actions in the sphere of prevention of risks resulting from both natural and human causes	
1.4. Contributing to the strengthening of cross-border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis I	2.4. Contributing to the strengthening of cross-border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis II	

4.1.2 AXES

Axis I: Competitiveness – Research and Innovation; Sustainable Development

In line with the objectives fixed by the Lisbon strategy, priority Axis I is developed as a fundamental line of action and transversal internally in the action framework of the programme in order to promote competitiveness and innovation in the cross-border area.

Given the number of envisaged policies, the impact of the Axis' strategy is closely linked to the level of concentration of financial resources and their degree of integration. Its effective implementation is strongly dependent on the level of integration of the projects and on the capacity for cooperation among the responsible actors. Consistently with these assumptions, the Axis can contribute a material added value in relation to the ability to identify the actual development priorities, to design quality interventions and to develop a strong action of multilevel institutional cooperation, involving a broad partnership. In this perspective, it will be very appropriate to focus on issues of common strategic importance, such as the promotion of research to facilitate sustainable development, the exploitation of natural and cultural resources in integration with models of sustainable tourism, the improvement of the system of cross-border accessibility and, finally, actions related to the strengthening of Italian-Maltese institutional partnerships.

Priority Axis I intends to reach the following Specific Objectives:

- 1.1 Supporting research and innovation in order to promote sustainable development paths
- 1.2 Improving cross-border accessibility and reinforcing transport systems that are more environmentally friendly
- 1.3 Contributing to the improvement of the integrated tourist offer in the cross-border area
- 1.4 Contributing to the strengthening of cross-border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis I

1.1 Supporting research and innovation in order to promote sustainable development paths

The promotion of research and innovation through the strengthening of collaboration between public entities, research institutions, Universities and enterprise organizations, represents the fundamental conditions to consolidate the competitiveness of the cross-border area.

In order to give a concrete added value to innovation projects for competitiveness, cross-border cooperation should aim at spreading the knowledge society over the cooperation area and at creating cross-border networks for innovation, in order to help strengthen the connection between businesses and centres of excellence. This strategic plan is expected to create networks of cooperation between research and business, strengthen the development of international technologic centres, contribute to the integration of human resources, enhance scientific competences, as well as to encourage the dissemination and application of innovation also in the tourist, handcraft and services fields and in general in all the priority sectors of the programme.

When considering the relevant amount of research and innovation structures present in the programme area, one realises the need for promoting: the creation of scientific and technological networks, to maximize synergies and enhance capacity for research and innovation; the promotion of partnerships among knowledge producers; the increase in the degree of internationalization of the

competence centres; the joint development of new applied research capabilities; and the exploitation of the excellence's experiences that can be made available to the productive systems. Towards this end, the development of joint cross-border projects strongly-oriented towards innovation that, in turn, would include a strong involvement of the private sector's enterprises, such as businesses and women's business associations, will be essential.

List of indicative possible actions:

- Implementation of dissemination, research and application actions in all the priority areas of the Programme
- Cooperation initiatives between public entities, research institutes, Universities and private sector's enterprises
- Interventions providing for the adoption of innovative and eco-efficient solutions in the field of the eco-sustainable management of water, waste and energy, particularly focusing on the minor islands
- Initiatives aimed at the realization and promotion of a brand of environment sustainability
- Awareness actions towards the SME of the tourist sector to increase the eco-efficiency levels of the production systems, also aimed at the use of financing opportunities external to the Programme

1.2 Improving cross-border accessibility and reinforcing transport systems that are more environmentally friendly

In order to guarantee the optimization and improvement of the connection system in aviation and maritime transport, with the full involvement (including financial resources wherever possible) of the operators and the institutions in the sector of transport and logistics, the programme strategy identifies within this specific objective the encouragement of a general improvement in the internal and external accessibility of the Italian-Maltese port and airport system, in a framework of environmentally sustainable development.

The strengthening of the accessibility structures assumes great importance in the attainment of significant results in the field of sustainable tourism development, also due to the presence of minor islands (e.g. the archipelagos of Sicilian minor islands and the island of Gozo on the Maltese territory) which, because of their "double insularity" present major disruption in the connection systems of the transport network at local/global level.

Some *accessibility* problems of the cooperation's territories are of crucial importance for the development of certain areas that are at risk of being marginalized by the development processes related to tourism.

The Programme can represent a concrete opportunity for the development of more environmentally-friendly air and sea connections, through a system of infrastructural endowment (material and intangible) of the area, directed at a sustainable policy for transport, as a fundamental prerequisite for promoting the tourist industry.

The presence of marinas assumes particular importance also in this framework, although appropriate interventions for improving the efficiency, through networking actions, of management, safety and offer qualification, may be necessary.

The possibility of providing the area with networks, fits into the context of the strategy for the improvement of connections (including telematics) of both main islands (Sicily and Malta) with their respective minor islands, making it possible to reduce the hardships related to problems of

accessibility and contribute towards the improvement in the quality of life of the disadvantaged areas and its inhabitants.

The upgrading of the quality levels of the tourist offer sets the preconditions for the attainment of higher common quality standards of the public infrastructure, designed to perform the functions of first reception and orientation of the tourist. Particular emphasis should be placed on the implementation of pilot interventions in those areas considered “gate” of tourist access to the cross-border territory, in order to afford the tourist with an immediate perception that environmental problems are being attended to as a priority.

With regard to the integration with the tourist sector, in order to develop the tourist potentialities of the cross-border area, the Programme’s purpose is to create an integrated strategy, aiming at interventions that are strongly correlated by a vertical (e. g. land-air-sea) and a horizontal (e. g. transport-tourism-natural and cultural resources) integration. A major effort must be made as far as the offer’s organization, also through integrated strategies for strengthening the links and for adding value to natural and cultural resources, accompanied by appropriate initiatives of information, communication and advertising.

List of indicative possible actions:

- System actions to enhance the integration of maritime and air transport systems of the cross-border area
- Action to experiment multimodal and/or combined land/sea/air transport solutions
- Development of solutions and services aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the cross-border transport system
- Adoption of eco-efficient systems of supply, particularly in the sphere of marinas
- Action to promote a public-private network for the integration and interoperability between the transport systems land/sea/air
- Promotion of integrated services for recreational seacraft

1.3 Contributing to the improvement of the integrated tourist offer in the cross-border area

Tourism is a leading sector of the economy of the cross-border area, also in terms of employment; among other things, it is characterized by significant growth rates on both sides of the cooperation area and has further potentialities of development. However, at present, the offer is oriented towards traditional forms of tourism promotion, with common problems of seasonal flows and the need to raise the quality standards and the supply’s diversification.

The development of joint actions to promote tourism and territorial marketing is another fundamental element of the specific objective aimed at the integration and the contextual conversion of the tourist offer system of the cross-border area.

The first requirement is to intervene in the sphere of promotion of the tourism image, through specific communication campaigns that show how many territories - characterized by separate tourist offers and, in many cases, competitive on the same market segments - aiming at the tourist fruition of natural and cultural resources, intend to offer an integrated tourist offer, based on environmental sustainability criteria. Closely related to this issue, is the realization of specific initiatives, through which the different packages linked to the integrated itineraries and those related to relational tourism can be placed concretely on the international tourist market.

Towards this end the promotion of the minor islands' common specificities assumes particular importance. Also, in pursuit of this strategic objective, the interventions contemplated should target the promotion of an extended tourist stay and the diversification of seasonality flows. Such initiatives can contribute towards the strengthening of connections and at networking functions and services.

List of indicative possible actions:

- Joint initiatives for the promotion and appreciation of specific tourist and cultural attractions (both tangible and intangible) through the realization of integrated tourist circuits
- Organizing joint international events aiming at balancing tourist seasonal flows in the cross-border area
- Actions of joint appreciation of the common traditions considered tourist attractors, also with reference to the Eno-gastronomy, even with innovative ways such as the Relational Tourism
- Creation of an area brand for the minor islands (Gozo, Comino; Lampedusa, Linosa, Pantelleria, Favignana, Levanzo, Marittimo)
- Development of common management system of the tourist destinations (Destination management), even through the activation of a joint telematic network for the territorial promotion (tele-reservation system)
- Re-conversion/creation of mini structures of tourist reception according to bio-building criteria

1.4 Contributing to the strengthening of cross-border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis I

The strengthening of the cross-border institutional partnership in the sectors relative to Priority Axis I contributes to fulfil the specific objective to ensure transversal and integrated development policies that will be realized with other programmes and instruments.

In order to define and include public services in a competitive plan of the cross-border area, it is also necessary to implement actions aimed at: the creation of institutional networks (e.g. towns, regions, associations); the realization of joint initiatives aimed at improving the accessibility to public services that impact positively on the quality of life (e.g. hospitals, cultural resources, services), or increasing the exploitation of opportunities for citizens and businesses (e.g. universities, services for enterprises, research centres, informative services). Interventions promoted in the sphere of this Axis will also contribute to the creation of networks among the main actors of local development, designed to improve access to services for businesses and local institutions.

In line with this perspective and in addition to the propaedeutic system's actions at the institutional level, specific interventions will be instituted in order to involve directly the stakeholders in temporary reception of the immigrants transiting in the cross-border area, thus guaranteeing coordinated actions in policies relative to the management of reception and transition activities.

List of indicative possible actions:

- Actions related to the institutional strengthening between Sicilian and Maltese administrations, competent in the sectors of Axis I, such as: exchange of experiences, exchanges of best practices, creation of cooperation networks, etc.
- Coordinated cooperation actions for the temporary reception system of the transiting immigrants in the cross-border area

Beneficiaries Axis I

Central and Local Public Administrations and Bodies – Universities and Centres and Research Consortia – Management entities of protected areas - Airport and Maritime Authorities - Public and Private Tourist operators – Organisations of SME's

Axis II: Environment, Energy and Risk prevention

Priority Axis II is based on the potential resources of the cross-border areas which can be further evaluated, on the basis of existing and sustainable development, in order to improve the quality of life for present and future generations.

The strategy foresees cooperation in the areas of energy, risk prevention and the management of environmental strategies, even through initiatives which address the strengthening of institutional capacity.

In line with the strategic directions of Axis I, the strategy will have to comply, where necessary, with the need to render more efficient the management systems of water resources and waste and to improve the prevention of natural and anthropogenic risks, as well as promoting the cooperation measures that are necessary for the development and the dissemination of renewable energy as well as energy-saving initiatives, including the testing and adoption of best practices and innovative solutions for the protection and eco-efficient management of the territory and the common prevention and management of risk.

Priority Axis II intends to reach the following Specific Objectives:

- 2.1 Contributing to the protection of the environment through the safeguarding, exploitation and monitoring of natural resources
- 2.2 Contributing to the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency
- 2.3 Promoting joint actions in the sphere of prevention of risks resulting from both natural and human causes
- 2.4 Contributing to the strengthening of cross border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis II

2.1 Contributing to the protection of the environment through the safeguarding, valorisation and monitoring of natural resources

The exploitation and monitoring of the cooperation area's natural and cultural resources is a key component of sustainable environmentally friendly development.

In terms of natural and cultural resources, the cooperation area has a rich heritage of international repute, with several sites of cultural interest and a widespread distribution of cultural and environmental heritage, generally not well-known and located in inland areas or only partially exploited.

The eligible area features a similar situation in respect of the main descriptive features of the state of the environment. Indeed, the territory is affected by common criticalities, which are especially relevant to the natural resources' management.

In this regard, the actions are intended at ensuring appropriate conditions for sustainable development of the natural resources, good levels of environmental services for the population and the enterprises (e.g. water services and water supply), as well as development in limited areas (e.g. minor islands and protected natural areas) can be ascribed to this Objective.

List of indicative possible actions:

- Development of coordinated actions of protection and reconstruction of the common biodiversity
- Joint actions for the creation of cross-border ecological corridors and the management of parks and protected areas, also with reference to the marine and coastal areas
- Actions related to the integrated sustainable management of water resources

2.2 Contributing to the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency

The current dependence of the eligible area's energy system on traditional energy sources is associated with strong development potentialities for the renewable energy sources, on both sides of the cross-border area. At the moment, this opportunity is scarcely used but can be one of the sustainable development solutions for limited areas of high naturalness (e.g. minor islands and protected natural areas), where renewable energy will be able to make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of these areas, also for the purpose of including them in a context of tourism development.

The Objective is aimed at spreading the most innovative technical solutions, already available in the field of energy supply systems and energy efficiency, on the territory of the cross-border area. Likewise, it also intends to test the transferability and applicability of innovative solutions adopted in other European territories in the interested cooperation area, seeking to capitalize in the cooperation area the experiences obtained in other contexts and from the previous cooperation Programme. Similarly, in the same sector, coordinated initiatives can be developed in the field of institutional cooperation among bodies responsible for regional policies, such as networks between managers of parks and natural sites, whose mission is the development of sustainable tourism through the use of renewable energy sources and energy saving applications.

Finally, the cross-border area has the ambition to promote scientific cooperation on stable foundations, supporting, for example an ad hoc strategic project for the creation of a truly Italian-Maltese common research centre, open, in the future, to other Mediterranean countries such as Tunisia (with which a specific Cooperation Programme is in the course of preparation). This initiative may constitute a privileged centre of reference for southern Mediterranean countries for the development of research and innovation units devoted to sustainable development, and in particular in addressing topics of energy production and the raising of eco-efficiency standards in the local productive systems, as well as the prevention of natural hazards and the fight against desertification in line with the other specific objectives of Axis II.

List of indicative possible actions:

- Actions for the development of energy supply systems from renewable sources

- Integrated actions for the implementation of intervention of energy saving and efficiency for buildings and the street lighting network
- Actions for the adjustment of the distribution networks, through specific technical solutions to enable the supply and distribution of energy from renewable sources
- Development of joint demonstration initiatives of public awareness for the dissemination of energy-saving practices
- Development of an Italian-Maltese Research centre for the transfer of solutions to increase the eco-efficiency of the local productive systems and the diffusion of eco-sustainable practices in the energetic field and the diffusion of energy-saving practices among the citizens

2.3 Promoting joint actions in the sphere of prevention of risks resulting from both natural and human causes

Safeguarding the environment against natural and technological risks and the dissemination of joint systems of risk prevention, represent key elements in guaranteeing a sustainable and harmonious development in the cross-border area which is partly liable to geological instability, flooding, coastal degradation, forest fires and seismic events.

Similarly, the transportation of hazardous material via the road network but especially via sea transport represents a technological risk which has to be taken into consideration vis-à-vis a development plan of the cross border area and its management through interventions which include the coordination of various responsible entities in different sectors. At the same time, initiatives supporting information dissemination, through the public administration of the cross-border area, have to be carried out showing best practises and management models that have already shown their efficiency with regard to the prevention of natural and anthropological risks.

In line with the previous specific objectives of Axis II, specific attention will be dedicated to the promotion of actions on the management of waste in the cross border area.

It is also worthy to mention that the peculiar geographic configuration of the cooperation area - characterized by the presence of minor islands ("double" insularity), urban and rural areas - requires that certain policies are designed to address the development of the capacity required to coordinate in a joint manner the sanitary, environmental and food risks of the cross-border area.

List of indicative possible actions:

- Activation of advanced technological systems for the territory's monitoring and the control of the common risks of the cross-border area (marine contamination, coastal erosion, forest fires, hydro-geological fragility, seismic events) and strengthening of the existing initiatives
- Common actions aimed at strengthening the cooperation model as far as regards prevention and management of maritime accidents and their simulation
- Development of experiences and exchanges between the Regione Siciliana and the respective competent entities by sector in Malta aimed at supporting coordinated management of the sanitary, food and environmental risks
- Actions aimed at sustainable integrated management of waste (in particular that of special type)
- Joint initiatives in the management of sea pollution caused by maritime means of transport

2.4 Contributing to the strengthening of cross border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis II

Due to its horizontal policy characterization, this environmental theme lends itself no doubt to the capitalisation of experiences in institutional cooperation.

The transversality of the environmentally-sustainable policies confers on the institutional and partnership cooperation an essential role, considering that the implementation of environmentally-friendly actions calls for all interested parties, to work together on the development of environmental interventions, based on vertical (e.g. waste-water - ground-air) and horizontal (e.g. air-transport-SME-energy) integration.

Institutional cooperation is particularly important for the specific environmental profile of the Programme, which bases its intervention's strategy on policies that are consistent with the principles of environmental sustainability.

The dissemination of experience in methodological tools, management and partnership models, is a great opportunity to harmonize the institutional paths, consolidate the administrative processes and simplify technical and financial procedures.

To this end, the Axis' purpose is to strengthen the actions aimed at raising the quality of cooperation among the cross-border area's institutions.

List of indicative possible actions:

- Actions related to the institutional strengthening between Sicilian and Maltese administrations, competent in the sectors of Axis II, such as: exchange of experiences, circulation of best practice, creation of cooperation networks, etc.

Beneficiaries Axis II

Central and Local Public Administrations and Bodies – Universities and Centres and Research Consortia – Management entities of protected areas - Airport and Maritime Authorities – Consortia and Local Development agencies

Axis III: Activities of Technical Assistance, Awareness, Communication and Publicity

Priority Axis III is aimed at securing a high quality level of management, surveillance and control of the Operational Programme by involving the entities and authorities provided for by Regulation EC/1080/2006 and their role is explained in further detail in chapter 6.

The lessons learnt from the 2004-2006 programme provide a number of elements which require due attention concerning the need to adapt the structure responsible for the management of the Programme in order to improve the modes of communication between the two partners sharing the Programme and to strengthen the partnership mechanisms, particularly, at a local level. From the experience acquired in the past, it is recommended that most support should be directed at local public entities which could be potential beneficiaries with the aim of enhancing the participation capacity of partners and to further improve the quality of projects.

The interventions of the Axis Technical Assistance will focus on the acquisition of services and equipment necessary for incrementing the levels of efficiency and effectiveness of the management, monitoring, control, evaluation and information and publicity.

Priority Axis III intends to reach the following Specific Objective:

- 3.1 Ensuring actions to support the Programme's implementation, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the management and surveillance system of the OP

3.1 Ensuring actions to support the Programme's implementation, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the management and surveillance system of the OP

Cross-border cooperation presents new, important challenges to the management structures of both countries. In this regard, the Technical Assistance priority Axis acquires a fundamental role in ensuring: efficient and effective support towards the implementation of the programme; unified and shared management of the programme; improved quality of projects; the implementation of joint projects; overall increase in information as well as increased information towards beneficiaries and the cross-border populations.

In addition to the actions provided by the regulations (e.g. management, evaluation, control), the Axis will aim at the creation of an administrative technical support to management (e.g. Joint Technical Secretariat), in order to support the Managing Authority and cooperation area's partnership during the implementing phase of the Programme.

A special support contribution should be oriented to quality project planning and the evaluation and joint implementation of the projects. In fact, in order to ensure an appropriate tool for information and preliminary support to the partners' planning capacity, both the cost of interventions of the Contact Point, located in the Maltese territory, as well as the related initiatives aimed at representing an information and animation presidium (acting in close collaboration with the Joint Technical Secretariat at the Managing Authority) will be charged on the Axis.

Also the actions in support of management, surveillance, evaluation, communication, monitoring and control, will be charged on Technical Assistance.

The procedures of selection relative to the activities of technical assistance will be activated in respect of the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

List of indicative possible actions:

- Activities of technical assistance for the efficient and effective implementation of the Programme
- Recruitment of personnel, both in Sicily and Malta, that ensures the effective implementation and coordination of the Programme
- Activities of animation, advising, support and technical assistance to the beneficiaries, also through internal competences of the Administrations
- Actions for the improvement and dissemination of the internal competences of the regional Administration
- Programme's evaluation activities
- Activities related to the system of surveillance, monitoring and control of the Programme
- Initiatives to sustain the activities of 1st and 2nd level controls in the whole programme area

- Acquisition of equipment and capital goods aimed at strengthening the management structure of the Programme
- Activity of analysis, study and research to support the implementation of the Programme
- Exchange of experiences, dissemination of best practices, visits, studies, seminars, etc., with the authorities of other territorial cooperation programmes, with particular reference to maritime cross-borders
- Activities of information and publicity.

Beneficiaries Axis III:

Managing Authority of the Programme and institutional bodies of the cooperation area

Summary of the Axes, the Specific objectives, the indicative actions and the final beneficiaries of the OP Italy-Malta 2007 - 2013

Axes	Specific Objective	Actions (indicative list)	Final Beneficiaries
<p>AXIS I COMPETITIVENESS: Innovation and Research; Sustainable Development</p>	<p>1.1 Supporting research and innovation in order to promote sustainable development paths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of dissemination, research and application actions in all the priority areas of the Programme • Cooperation initiatives between public entities, research institutes, Universities and private sector's enterprises • Interventions providing for the adoption of innovative and eco-efficient solutions in the field of eco-sustainable management of water, waste and energy, particularly focusing on the minor islands • Initiatives aimed at the realization and promotion of a brand of environment sustainability • Awareness actions towards the SME of the tourist sector to increase the eco-efficiency levels of the production systems, also aimed at the use of financing opportunities external to the Programme 	<p>Central and Local Public Administrations and Bodies – Universities and Centres and Research Consortia - Management entities of protected areas - Airport and Maritime Authorities - Public and Private Tourist operators – Organisations of SME's</p>
	<p>1.2. Improving cross-border accessibility and reinforcing transport systems that are more environmentally friendly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System actions to enhance the integration of maritime and air transport systems of the cross-border area • Action to experiment multimodal and/or combined land/sea/air transport solutions • Development of solutions and services aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the cross-border transport system • Adoption of eco-efficient systems of supply, particularly in the sphere of marinas • Action to promote a public-private network for the integration and interoperability between the transport systems land/sea/air • Promotion of integrated services for recreational boating 	
	<p>1.3. Contributing to the improvement of the integrated tourist offer in the cross-border area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint initiatives for the promotion and enhancement of specific tourist and cultural attractions (both tangible and intangible) through the realization of integrated tourist circuits • Organizing joint international events aiming at balancing tourist seasonal flows in the cross-border area • Actions of joint valorization of the common traditions considered tourist attractors, also with reference to the Eno-gastronomy, even with innovative ways such as the Relational Tourism • Creation of an area brand for the minor islands (Gozo, Comino; Lampedusa, Linosa, Pantelleria, Favignana, Levanzo, Marittimo) • Development of common management system of the tourist destinations (Destination Management), even through the activation of a joint telematic network for the territorial promotion (tele-reservation system) • Re-conversion/creation of mini structures of tourist reception according to the bio-building criteria 	

*Operational Programme Cross-Border Cooperation Italy-Malta 2007-2013
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	<p>1.4. Contributing to the strengthening of cross-border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis I</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions related to the institutional strengthening between Sicilian and Maltese administrations, competent in the sectors of Axis I, such as: exchange of experiences, circulation of best practice, creation of cooperation networks, etc. • Coordinated cooperation actions for the temporary reception system of the transiting immigrants in the cross-border area 	
<p style="text-align: center;">AXIS II Environment, Energy and Risk Prevention</p>	<p>2.1 Contributing to the protection of the environment through the safeguarding, valorisation and monitoring of natural resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of coordinated actions of protection and reconstruction of the common biodiversity • Joint actions for the creation of cross-border ecological corridors and the management of parks and protected areas, also with reference to the marine and coastal areas • Actions related to the integrated sustainable management of water resources 	<p>Central and Local Public Administrations and Bodies – Universities and Centres and Research Consortia - Management entities of protected areas - Airport and Maritime Authorities – Consortia and Local Development agencies</p>
	<p>2.2. Contributing to the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions for the development of energy supply systems from renewable sources • Integrated actions for the implementation of intervention of energy saving and efficiency for buildings and the street lighting network • Actions for the adjustment of the distribution networks, through specific technical solutions to enable the release and distribution of energy from renewable sources • Development of joint demonstration initiatives of public awareness for the dissemination of energy-saving practices • Development of an Italian-Maltese Research centre for the transfer of solutions to increase the eco-efficiency of the local productive systems and the diffusion of eco-sustainable practices in the energetic field and the diffusion of energy saving practices among the citizens 	
	<p>2.3. Promoting joint actions in the sphere of prevention of risks resulting from both natural and human causes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation of advanced technological systems for the territory's monitoring and the control of the common risks of the cross-border area (marine contamination, coastal erosion, forest fires, hydro-geological fragility, seismic events) and strengthening of the existing initiatives • Common actions aimed at strengthening the cooperation model as far as regards prevention and management of maritime accidents and their simulation • Development of experiences and exchanges between the Regione Siciliana and the respective competent entities by sector in Malta aimed at supporting coordinated management of the sanitary, food and environmental risks 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions aimed at sustainable integrated management of waste (in particular that of special type) • Joint initiatives in the management of sea pollution caused by maritime means of transport 	
	<p>2.4. Contributing to the strengthening of cross border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis II</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions related to the institutional strengthening between Sicilian and Maltese administrations, competent in the sectors of Axis II, such as: exchange of experiences, circulation of best practice, creation of cooperation networks, etc. 	
<p align="center">AXIS III Technical Assistance, awareness, communication and publicity</p>	<p>3.1. Ensuring actions to support the Programme's implementation, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the management and surveillance system of the OP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities of technical assistance for the efficient and effective implementation of the Programme • Recruitment of personnel, both in Sicily and Malta, that ensures the effective implementation and coordination of the Programme • Activities of animation, advising, support and technical assistance to the beneficiaries, also through internal competences of the Administrations • Actions for the improvement and dissemination of the internal competences of the regional Administration • Programme's evaluation activities • Activities related to the system of surveillance, monitoring and control of the Programme • Initiatives to sustain the activities of 1st and 2nd level controls in the whole programme area • Acquisition of equipment and capital goods aimed at strengthening the management structure of the Programme • Activity of analysis, study and research to support the implementation of the Programme • Exchange of experiences, dissemination of best practices, visits, studies, seminars, etc., with the authorities of other territorial cooperation programmes, with particular reference to maritime cross-borders • Activities of information and publicity 	<p align="center">Managing Authority of the Programme and institutional bodies of the cooperation area</p>

4.1.3 INDICATORS

In line with Regulation EC/1080/2006, which recommends the utilisation of indicators to evaluate results and impacts of the programme, as well as the level of cooperation, the following indicators have been selected on the basis of the methodological suggestions found in the “Working document of the EC on indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the programmes 2007-2013” and the specificities and needs of the cross-border area.

The indicators can be grouped under two headings:

- a) Indicators at Programme level,
- b) Indicators at Priority Axes level.

a) INDICATORS AT PROGRAMME LEVEL

INDICATORS	UNIT OF MEASURE	OBJECTIVE	SOURCE	SURVEY
LEVEL OF COOPERATION OF PROJECTS AT PROGRAMME LEVEL				
Projects that respect at least two of the following criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint personnel, joint financing	Percentage (%) on total of projects	20%	Monitoring (project selection phase)	Annual
Projects that respect at least three of the following criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint personnel, joint financing	Percentage (%) on total of projects	55%	Monitoring (project selection phase)	Annual
Projects that respect all of the following criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint personnel, joint financing	Percentage (%) on total of projects	25%	Monitoring (project selection phase)	Annual
LEVEL OF COOPERATIVE NATURE AT PROGRAMME LEVEL				
Projects that promote the use of common infrastructure	Percentage (%) on total of projects	10%	Monitoring	Annual
Projects that develop partnerships in the public services sector	Percentage (%) on total of projects	15%	Monitoring	Annual
Projects that reduce insularity through better transport accessibility, ICT networks and services	Percentage (%) on total of projects	15%	Monitoring	Annual
Projects that encourage and improve the protection and common management of the environment	Percentage (%) on total of projects	20%	Monitoring	Annual
Projects that contribute to the management of natural and anthropic risks	Percentage (%) on total of projects	10%	Monitoring	Annual
Projects that promote R&ST and innovative networks	Percentage (%) on total of projects	10%	Monitoring	Annual

Projects that jointly promote tourism in the cross-border area	Percentage (%) on total of projects	20%	Monitoring	Annual
Public institutions (regional, local) that cooperate on cross-border level	Number	100	Monitoring	Annual

1) Utilisation of indicators from the Working Document of the EC: *Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators - New Programming Period 2007-2013 (August 2006)*

b) INDICATORS AT PRIORITY AXES LEVEL

AXES OF REFERENCE	INDICATORS	UNIT OF MEASURE	OBJECTIVE	SOURCE	SURVEY
REALIZZAZIONE					
AXIS I COMPETITIVENESS: INNOVATION AND RESEARCH; SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	R&ST projects that involve public entities, research institutions, Universities and enterprise organisations	Number	5	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Projects that promote actions of awareness even to SME's for the utilisation of eco-compatible models in the tourism sector, management and supply of natural resources	Number	2	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Projects of territorial marketing and joint promotion of tourism and cultural potential of the cross-border area	Number	2	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Projects aimed at the improvement of the coordination and accessibility of transportation systems in the programme area	Number	3	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Projects of promotion in favour of the reconversion of the transport system respecting environmental sustainability and with particular reference to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions	Number	1	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Projects aimed at the realisation and promotion of a brand of environmental sustainability even for the minor islands of the programme area	Number	1	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Projects that promote the strengthening of the institutional partnership in the cross-border area	Number	2	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
AXIS II ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND	Projects of management and prevention from natural and anthropic risks (including technological risks)	Number	2	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Projects aimed at promoting the safeguarding of the environment of the area (including the management of parks and protected areas)	Number	3	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme

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	Projects relating to the improvement of the energy efficiency and the utilisation of sources of renewable energy	Number	5	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Projects that promote the strengthening of the institutional partnership in the cross-border area	Number	2	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
AXIS III TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AWARENESS, COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY	Personnel for the Joint Technical Secretariat	Number	4	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Communication and Publicity events	Number	30	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme
	Operational Programme Guidelines	Number	5	Monitoring	Annual and at end of programme

AXES OF REFERENCE	INDICATORS	UNIT OF MEASURE	OBJECTIVE	BASE LINE	SOURCE	SURVEY
	RESULT					
AXIS I COMPETITIVENESS: INNOVATION AND RESEARCH; SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	Development of cross-border projects based on R&ST that involve public entities, research institutions, Universities and enterprise organisations	No. of participating organisations	15	4	Monitoring	Programme end
	Public and private entities involved in projects for the utilisation of eco-compatible models in the tourism sector as well as the management and supply of natural resources	Number	10	1	Monitoring	Programme end
	Countries/tour operators reached by the joint promoting actions	Number	5	1	Monitoring	Programme end
	Area Brand	Number	1	-	Monitoring	Programme end
	Public entities involved in the exchange of experiences	ΔN.	+15	10	Monitoring	Programme end
	Networks created in the tourism sector	Number	+3	1	Monitoring	Programme end
AXIS II ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND RISK PREVENTION	Surface area effected by projects of safeguarding and management of the environment	% of the cross-border area	more than 15%	-	Monitoring	Programme end
		% of the cross-border area	more than 10%	-	Monitoring	Programme end
	EMAS certifications attained by local public entities	ΔN.	+8	0	Monitoring	Programme end
	Common actions for the institutional coordination against environmental and technological risks	Number	2	0	Monitoring	Programme end
	Increasing power derived from renewable sources	ΔKw	+500	n.d.	Monitoring	Programme end
	Public entities involved in exchange of experience	ΔN.	+15	-	Monitoring	Programme end
AXIS III TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AWARENESS, COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY	Population of the cross-border area reached through Information campaigns	% of the population	20%	-	Monitoring	Programme end

4.2 GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF STRATEGIC COHERENCE

4.2.1 COHERENCE WITH THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS

According to the (EC) Regulation 1083/2006, in particular, the general provisions concerning the Structural Funds for the period 2007-2013, the Territorial Cooperation Objective has to keep the Community Strategic Orientations for the cohesion policies (CSO) as a reference point for the definition of its own strategies

The combination of the objectives contained in the cross-border Operational Programme Italy-Malta 2007-13 clearly responds to a general framework which is coherent with the priorities set in the CSO:

- To make Europe and its regions more attractive for investment and employment (Orientation 1);
- To promote knowledge and innovation towards growth (Orientation 2);
- More and better jobs (Orientation 3).

The Programme's strategy is focused on increasing attractiveness and competitiveness in the cross-border area within the context of sustainable development whilst supporting the synergies among economic, social and environmental dimensions, in accordance with the integrated lines for growth and employment of the renewed Lisbon agenda.

In particular, the Programme's interventions are aimed at:

- The development of a knowledge-based economy through the development of research and innovation, as well as the improvement of the accessibility and fruition of the territory, with due attention to the quality of services, through a determined orientation guaranteeing higher standards of environmental compatibility;
- The safeguarding of the environment through the monitoring and the valorisation of the natural resources, applying eco-compatible forms of energy resources management and the promotion of joint actions aimed at the prevention of both natural and anthropic risks.

In accordance with Orientation 1, the OP continuing on the 2000 - 2006 programming, aims, on one hand, to promote more sustainable long and short range territorial access on both shores and to integrate the transport system offer. On the other hand, it aims at strengthening the synergies between environmental protection and growth through the valorisation of the environmental and cultural resources for tourism purposes thus envisaging the promotion of renewable forms of energy securing higher energy efficiency.

Additionally priority Axis II (Innovation and Environment) will contribute towards the pursuit of this objective, flowing from the Orientation 1 and is intended to promote a more sustainable use of the natural resources, the diffusion of renewable resources and, thanks to the innovation of the management systems, to higher energy efficiency.

In accordance with Orientation 2, the Operational Programme (Priority Axis I), by means of specific objective 1.1, intends to promote research and innovation for growth, while respecting a clear path for the sustainable development of the cross-border area. The Programme aims at strengthening the research and innovation competences of both territorial systems thus providing for larger participation in the European Research Space and facilitating, amongst others, indirect impacts on CSO Objective 2.2 i.e. *"to facilitate the innovation and promote the entrepreneurial activities"*.

The following table highlights the relation between the orientations and the objectives singled out by the CSO as well the relevant intervention spheres of the OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013.

Concordance table between OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013 and Community Strategic Orientations

Community Strategic Orientations (CSO)	OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013
<p>Orientation 1 – Making Europe and the regions more attractive for the investments and the activity of the enterprises.</p> <p>1.1. Strengthening the transport infrastructures</p> <p>1.2 Strengthening the synergies between environment protection and growth</p>	<p>AXIS I</p> <p>COMPETITIVENESS: Innovation and Research; Sustainable Development</p>
<p>Orientation 1 - Making Europe and the regions more attractive for the investments and the activity of the enterprises.</p> <p>1.2 Strengthening the synergies between environment protection and growth</p> <p>1.3 Reducing the intensive use of traditional energy sources in Europe</p> <p>Orientation 2 – Promoting knowledge and innovation for growth</p> <p>2.1 Increasing and addressing the investments to the RTD</p>	<p>AXIS II</p> <p>Environment, Energy and Risk Prevention</p>
<p>Orientation 3 - Better and more jobs</p> <p>2.4 Administrative capability</p>	<p>AXIS III</p> <p>Technical Assistance, awareness, communication and publicity</p>

4.2.2 COHERENCE WITH THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC REFERENCE FRAMEWORKS

According to article 27 of the Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, each Member State presents a National Strategic Reference Framework which grants the coherence with the Community Strategic Orientations for the cohesion, connects itself to the national reform Programmes relevant to Lisbon’s Strategy and acts as the base instrument to draw up the Operational Programmes.

On the basis of the priorities defined by both Italian and Maltese national strategic frameworks, the OP Italy-Malta, has identified as territorial cooperation objectives themes and fields of intervention common to both Strategic Frameworks. In particular, there are specific objectives strongly related to the following national Priorities:

1. strengthening the transport system (Priority 6 of the NSF Italy and Strategic Objective 1 of the NSRF Malta);
2. enhancement of natural resources and cultural heritage (Priority 5 of NSF Italy and Strategic Objective 2 and 4 of NSRF Malta);
3. support to research and innovation (Priority 4 of NSF Italy and Strategic Objective 1 of NSRF Malta);
4. sustainable use of natural resources and environment protection (Priority 2 of NSF Italy and Strategic Objective 2 of NSRF Malta);
5. strengthening capacity building (Priority 10 of NSF Italy and Strategic Objective 3 of NSRF Malta).

Considering the strategic orientation of the OP Italy-Malta towards the implementation of sustainable development paths, the potentialities to pursue the priorities defined in the national Frameworks are relevant to the utilisation of natural resources for tourism and the cultural heritage as well as global environmental protection.

Concordance table among OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013 and National Strategic Reference Frameworks

OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013	NSF Italy	NSRF Malta
<p>AXIS I – COMPETITIVENESS: Innovation and Research; Sustainable Development</p> <p>1.1 Supporting research and innovation in order to promote sustainable development paths</p> <p>1.2 Improving cross-border accessibility and reinforcing transport systems that are more environmentally friendly</p> <p>1.3 Contributing to the improvement of the integrated tourist offer in the cross-border area</p> <p>1.4 Contributing to the strengthening of cross-border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis I</p>	<p>Priority 2. Promotion, valorisation and diffusion of research and innovation for competitiveness</p> <p>Priority 6. Networks and connections for mobility</p> <p>Priority 5. Utilisation and development of natural and cultural resources as tourist attractions</p> <p>Priority 10. Governance and institutional capacity</p>	<p>Strategic Objective 2 - Improving Malta's attractiveness and the quality of life</p> <p><i>2.1 Improving and expanding the transport infrastructure</i></p> <p>Strategic Objective 4 - Addressing Gozo's regional distinctiveness</p> <p><i>4.1 Accessibility and inter-island transport</i></p> <p>Strategic Objective 1- Sustaining a growing, knowledge-based, competitive economy</p> <p><i>1.3 Sustaining the tourist industry and promoting culture</i></p>
<p>AXIS II – Environment, Energy and Risk Prevention</p> <p>2.1 Contributing to the protection of the environment through the safeguarding, valorisation and monitoring of natural resources</p> <p>2.2 Contributing to the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency</p> <p>2.3 Promoting joint actions in the sphere of prevention of risks resulting from both natural and human causes</p> <p>2.4 Contributing to the strengthening of cross-border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis II</p>	<p>Priority 3. Energy and environment: sustainable and efficient use of resources</p> <p>Priority 10. Governance and institutional capacity</p>	<p>Strategic Objective 1- Sustaining a growing, knowledge-based, competitive economy</p> <p><i>1.2 Mobilizing investment in RTD</i></p> <p>Strategic Objective 2 - Improving Malta's attractiveness and the quality of life</p> <p><i>2.2 Environment and risk prevention</i></p> <p><i>2.3 Energy</i></p>

4.2.3 COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES ERDF CONVERGENCE

The OP Italy-Malta, co-financed by the ERDF under Objective 3 (Territorial Cooperation) of the Structural Funds, overlaps in geographical and interventional terms with the Operational Programmes ERDF of the Objective 1 (Convergence) for which the Sicilian Region and the Maltese Government are responsible.

The geographical overlapping is total in Malta's case, while in Sicily it is only partial, as the latter is limited only to the eligible areas of Trapani, Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Ragusa and Siracusa's Provinces.

With reference to the interventional fields, the Community Regulations do not establish boundaries between the Convergence Programmes and the Territorial Cooperation's Programmes. Hence, the OP Italy-Malta can legitimately pursue the same objectives of the Convergence Programme. However, it is evident that the different financial dimensions of these two types of operational tools, together with the necessity to start from the definition of the common specificities as part of the definition of the interventional strategy of the cooperation Programmes, relevant to the strong and weak points and to the opportunities and threats, naturally circumscribe the possible synergy and complementarity spaces to limited interventional thematic spheres.

Within such a framework, the OP intervenes, through joint actions, to address the strengthening of several intervention lines aimed at the pursuit of objectives stemming from the common specificities of both shores of the eligible areas. In this case, the possible synergies are relevant to the distinction between "hard" actions, highly impacting on the territory, written and implemented in the sphere of the OP Convergence and "soft" actions, aimed at providing punctual and "niche" solutions, written in the OP Italy-Malta. However, the OP Italy-Malta is not designed to operate in other spheres which are amply covered by the OP Convergence's intervention, such as the direct support to enterprises, which could otherwise produce a "crowding-out" effect in case of a parallel intervention in the same territories.

The following scheme summarises the most evident national connections between the specific objectives of the OP Italy-Malta and the specific objectives of the OP ERDF Convergence for which the Sicilian Region and the Maltese Government are responsible.

Concordance table among OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013 and the ERDF Programmes Sicily and Malta

OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013	OP ERDF Sicily	OP ERDF Malta
<p>AXIS I – Competitiveness: Innovation and Research; Sustainable Development</p> <p>1.1 Supporting research and innovation in order to promote sustainable development paths</p> <p>1.2 Improving cross-border accessibility and reinforcing transport systems that are more environmentally friendly</p> <p>1.3 Contributing to the improvement of the integrated tourist offer in the cross-border area</p> <p>1.4 Contributing to the strengthening of cross-border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis I</p>	<p>Axis I – Networks and connections for mobility</p> <p>Specific Objective 1.2 – Increasing the supply and functionality of the infrastructural points able to promote the inter-modality and optimum transport for goods and people, with particular reference to the insular specificities of the territory.</p> <p>Axis III – Enhancing the cultural identities and the landscape-environment resources for tourism attractions and their development.</p> <p>Specific Objective 3.1 – Enhancing the cultural heritage and activities to increase the territories’ attractiveness, in order to strengthen social cohesion and improve the quality of life of residents.</p> <p>Specific Objective 3.2 – Strengthening the Sicilian ecological network, supporting the adjustment and promotion of high natural areas and preserving their bio-diversity, according to a sustainable and stable economic and social development perspective.</p> <p>Specific Objective 3.3 – Strengthening the competitiveness of the Sicilian tourist system through the widening, restoration and diversification of the tourist offer and strengthening productive investments in the tourist sector.</p>	<p>Priority Axis I - Enhancing Knowledge and Innovation</p> <p>Investment in RTDi and RTDi-related Infrastructure and ICT</p> <p>Priority Axis III – Developing the TEN-T</p> <p>Priority Axis 6 – Urban regeneration and Improving the Quality of Life (Internal Mobility)</p> <p>Maritime Transport Links</p> <p>Priority Axis II - Promoting Sustainable Tourism</p> <p>Niche Market Development and Branding</p> <p>Aid Schemes for Tourism/Cultural Undertakings</p>

<p>AXIS II – Environment, Energy and Risk Prevention</p> <p>2.1 Contributing to the protection of the environment through the safeguarding, valorisation and monitoring of natural resources</p> <p>2.2 Contributing to the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency</p> <p>2.3 Promoting joint actions in the sphere of prevention of risks resulting from both natural and human causes</p> <p>2.4 Contributing to the strengthening of cross border institutional partnership in the areas identified under Priority Axis II</p>	<p>Axis II – Efficient use of natural resources</p> <p>Specific Objective 2.1 – Promoting the diffusion of renewable sources and favouring the rationalization of demand for energy, adjusting production installations and distribution networks.</p> <p>Specific Objective 2.3 – Implementing planning in the field of the hydro-geological, seismic, industrial and environmental risk and implementing plans for the prevention of both anthropogenic and natural risk.</p> <p>Axis 4 –Diffusion of research, innovation and IS</p> <p>Specific Objective 4.1: Promoting and sustaining the collaboration between research institutes and enterprises, supporting the cooperation and the technological transfer in the sphere of technological districts and productive clusters and introducing innovations in the small to medium-sized enterprises, enterprises’ consortia and productive districts.</p>	<p>Priority Axis I - Enhancing Knowledge and Innovation</p> <p>Investment in RTDi and RTDi-related Infrastructure and ICT</p> <p>Priority Axis 4 – Upgrading services of general economic interest</p> <p>Energy</p> <p>Water</p> <p>Priority Axis 5 - Safeguarding the Environment</p> <p>Solid Waste</p>
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4.2.4 COMPLEMENTARITY WITH OTHER TERRITORIAL COOPERATION PROGRAMMES

The whole territory of the eligible area, because of its central geographical position in the Mediterranean Basin in the sphere of the objective Territorial Cooperation, is involved in the implementation of the cross-border Operational Programme Mediterranean (OP Med).

Moreover, the European Neighbourhood Policy includes the implementation of an analogous Mediterranean Programme (OP ENPI), aimed at the development of the cooperation between the Member States of EU of the Mediterranean area and the non EU member Countries, gravitating inside the Basin.

Furthermore, Sicily, and more specifically its eligible areas of the OP Italy-Malta, is involved in the cross-border Cooperation Programme ENPI Italy-Tunisia.

Against this scenario, the coherence of the different programme frameworks is an important element for the promotion of stable cooperative actions and the background for the concrete implementation of potential synergies of sustainable development processes.

The OP Italy-Malta inscribes itself in such a perspective, presenting several common points with the above mentioned Programmes with reference both to the themes as well as to the types of intervention.

Finally, it is worth underlying the existence of significant areas of complementarity relevant to the sustainability and diffusion of renewable energies (explicitly outlined as an objective also by the OP MED and the OP Italy-Tunisia); the protection and enhancement of the natural and cultural resources and prevention of risks connected thereto all the cooperation Programmes involving the eligible areas. It must also be underlined that active synergies in the sphere of the promotion of trans-national networks of scientific research and the development of integrated forms of sustainable development are objects of specific objectives and measures.

The following scheme sets out the contact points relevant to the complementarity element among the different Programmes.

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Concordance table among the OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013 and other Cooperation Programmes

OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013	OP MED	OP ENPI	OP Italy-Tunisia
<p>AXIS I Competitiveness: Innovation and Research; Sustainable Development</p>	<p>Axis II – Safeguarding of the environment and promotion of a sustainable territorial development <i>2.1 – Safeguard and valorisation of the natural and cultural resources, risks prevention</i></p> <p>Axis III – Improving mobility and accessibility of the territories</p>	<p>Axis I - Accessibility and networks <i>1.3 Promoting strategies for sustainable territorial development</i> <i>1.4 Improving the services for intermodal transports</i></p> <p>Axis III Natural and cultural resources <i>3.2 Strengthening the connections among the Mediterranean ports, through the use of the ICT applied to maritime transport and port operations</i></p>	<p>Priority 1 – Development and integration of the economic fields <i>Measure 1.3 – Tourism development</i></p> <p>Priority 5 – Promotion of sustainable development <i>Measure 5.2 - Protection and valorisation of the natural and cultural heritage</i></p>
<p>AXIS II Environment, Energy, and Risk Prevention</p>	<p>Axis I – Strengthening of innovation’s capabilities <i>1.1 – Diffusion of innovative technologies</i></p> <p>Axis II – Safeguarding of the environment and promotion of sustainable territorial development <i>2.1 Protection and valorisation of the natural and cultural resources and risk prevention</i> <i>2.2 Promotion of renewable energies</i> <i>2.3. Prevention of maritime risks and strengthening of marine security</i></p>	<p>Axis I – Accessibility and networks <i>1.1 – Promoting research and innovation to create a scientific community of the Mediterranean</i> <i>1.3 Promoting strategies for sustainable territorial development</i></p> <p>Axis II – Innovation and competitiveness <i>2.1 Promoting environmental safeguards and strengthening the capacity to face emergencies, the management of natural resources and waste and the protection of the natural heritage.</i></p>	<p>Priority 3 – Promotion of research and innovation <i>Measure 3.1 Promotion of the development of technological poles</i></p> <p>Priority 5 – Promotion of sustainable development <i>Measure 5.3 - Development of renewable energies</i></p> <p>Priority 7 – Cultural and scientific cooperation <i>Measure 7.1 Promotion of cultural and scientific cooperation’s networks</i></p>

4.2.5 COMPLEMENTARITY WITH THE ESF CONVERGENCE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES, THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND EFF PROGRAMMES

The Operational Programme Italy-Malta 2007-2013 is designed to contribute towards the development of a knowledge society in the cross-border area, coherently with the renewed Lisbon's agenda, especially through the pursuit of the specific objectives listed under Axis 1.

In this regard, the actions provided for in the OP are coherent and complementary to the actions financed by the ESF which is more specifically directed to the promotion of training actions, social insertion, support to disadvantaged people as far as regards the work access and reduction of disparities in the employment field. Among the actions promoted by the OP, the ones comparable with the type-actions financed by the ESF concern the experiences' exchanges and the good practices' diffusion and the capacity building actions outlined in Axis I and II.

Insofar as it relates to the complementarity element of the Italy-Malta Programme 2007-2013 with the respective EAFRD Programme (*National Rural Development Strategy for the Programming Period 2007-2013* in the case of Malta, and the *Rural Development Plan for Sicily – PSR 2007-2013* in the case of Sicily), the Programme, whilst being coherently integrated and complementary in itself, manages to steer away from any notions of overlap in the interventions to be implemented. In fact, the Operational Programme does not contemplate any of those interventions which are destined to be tackled specifically by agricultural enterprises, thus contributing in a transversal manner, through indirect actions of a co-operative nature promoted by the strategy, to strengthen, in the cross-border area, the necessary synergies and useful exchanges of experiences among the various players, in order to enhance 'inter alia' the value of agricultural products and quality foods whilst conserving common cultural traditions, upgrading protection levels of natural resources in the rural areas, with particular reference to biodiversity, the prevention of risks and the preservation of parks in the protected areas (*Axis I and II of the National Rural Development Strategy for the Programming Period 2007-2013 and Axis II and III of the PSR Sicily 2007-2013*).

Within the scope of Axis 4 of PSR Sicily 2007-2013, particular relevance is given to territorial cooperation, both interregional and transnational, among the Local Action Groups (LAG), insofar as this contributes towards the possible development of "joint projects that put into play the afferent resources in the different territories involved". However, considering that for the purpose of the policies of cohesion 2007-2013, the Republic of Malta, for the first time contemplates the setting up of LAGs as the active subjects at the local development level and underlines that the scope of interventions of the Italy-Malta Programme 2007-2013 does not envisage in any way the diffusion and the exchange of management experiences of the LEADER Programming.

Therefore, assuming that the scope of intervention of the two Programmes must retain clear demarcation lines in the light of the different strategic priorities contemplated in the respective strategic actions, the Managing Authority of the Italy-Malta Programme 2007-2013, shall ensure strict compliance in thematic complementarity in relation to the operations that could be financed through the involvement of the representatives of the competent Managing Authorities in both Sicily and Malta of the respective Rural Development Plans.

As regards the complementarity with the two European Fisheries Fund (EFF) national Programmes, this Operational Programme, through the implementation of the specific objective 1.2 and the operational objective 2.2.1, is meant to contribute, although indirectly, to support sustainable fishing in the common areas, thus strengthening the intervention of the European Fund for Fishing.

5. FINANCIAL PLAN

5.1 ERDF CONTRIBUTION PER YEAR FOR THE PERIOD 2007 – 2013

The following table shows the expenditure of ERDF for each year in the period 2007 – 2013 with respect to the Operational Programme Italy-Malta (values in Euro)

ANNUALITY	ERDF CONTRIBUTION
2008	8,279,534
2009	4,095,292
2010	4,236,405
2011	4,369,327
2012	4,500,430
2013	4,667,029
TOTAL	30,148,017

5.2 ALLOCATION PER PRIORITY AXES

The following table depicts the indicative Financial Plan per Axes of the Operational Programme Italy–Malta (values in Euro)

PRIORITY AXES	ERDF Contribution (a)	National co-financing (b)= (c)+(d)	Indicative division of the National co-financing		Total funds (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	For information	
			National public funds (c)	National private funds (d)			BEI contribution	Other funds
PRIORITY AXIS I (49%)	14,772,528	2,606,917	2,606,917	0	17,379,445	85%	0	0
PRIORITY AXIS II (45%)	13,566,608	2,394,107	2,394,107	0	15,960,715	85%	0	0
PRIORITY AXIS III (6%)	1,808,881	319,214	319,214	0	2,128,095	85%	0	0
TOTAL	30,148,017	5,320,238	5,320,238	0	35,468,255	85%	0	0

Axis I: Competitiveness: Innovation and research; Sustainable development

Axis II: Environment, energy and risk prevention

Axis III: Technical assistance, awareness, communication and publicity

5.3 BREAKDOWN OF FINANCIAL PLAN BY CATEGORIES OF INTERVENTION

Priority Theme	Code	Total ERDF	Indicative Quota (% ERDF contribution)
<i>Research and Technological Development (RTD), innovation and Entrepreneurship</i>			
RTD activities in research centres	1	1,808,881	6.00%
RTD infrastructure (incl. physical plant, instrumentation and high speed computer networks linking research centres) and centres for competence in a specific technology	2	1,507,401	5.00%
Technology transfer and improvement of cooperation networks between small businesses (SMEs), between these and other businesses and universities, post-secondary education establishments of all kinds, regional authorities, research centres and scientific and technological poles (scientific and technological parks, technopoles, etc.)	3	1,205,921	4.00%
<i>Information Society</i>			
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (access, security, interoperability, risk prevention, research, innovation, digital contents, etc.)	11	904,441	3.00%
Services and applications for the citizen (e-health, e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, etc.)	13	904,441	3.00%
Services and applications for SMEs (e-commerce, education and training, creation of networks, etc.)	14	904,441	3.00%
<i>Transport</i>			
Multimodal Transports	26	602,960	2.00%
Ports	30	753,700	2.50%
<i>Energy</i>			
Renewable energy: solar	40	4,220,722	14.00%
Energy efficiency, co-generation, energy management	43	2,411,841	8.00%
<i>Environmental Protection and Risk Prevention</i>			
Management of household and industrial waste	44	1,205,921	4.00%
Management and distribution of water (drinking water)	45	904,441	3.00%
Water treatment (waste water)	46	301,480	1.00%

Integrated prevention and control	48	602,960	2.00%
Promotion of biodiversity and nature protection (including Natura 2000)	51	1,205,921	4.00%
Promotion of clean urban transport	52	602,960	2.00%
Risk prevention (including the drafting and implementation of plans and measures to prevent and manage natural and technological risks)	53	1,205,921	4.00%
Other measures to preserve the environment and prevent risks	54	904,441	3.00%
<i>Tourism</i>			
Promotion of natural assets	55	1,055,181	3.50%
Protection and development of natural heritage	56	1,205,921	4.00%
<i>Culture</i>			
Protection and preservation of cultural heritage	58	1,356,660	4.50%
<i>Increasing the adaptability of workers and firms, enterprises and entrepreneurs</i>			
Design and dissemination of innovative and more productive ways of organising work	63	452,220	1.50%
<i>Improving human capital</i>			
Developing human potential in the field of research and innovation, in particular through post-graduate studies and training of researchers, and networking activities between universities, research centres and businesses	74	753,700	2.50%
<i>Mobilisation for reforms in the fields of employment and inclusion</i>			
Promoting partnerships, pacts and initiatives through the networking of relevant stakeholders	80	753,700	2.50%
<i>Strengthening Institutional Capacity at National, Regional and Local Level</i>			
Mechanisms for improving good policy programme design, monitoring and evaluation at national, regional and local level, capacity-building in the delivery of policies and programmes	81	602,960	2.00%
<i>Technical Assistance</i>			
Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection	85	1,205,921	4.00%
Evaluation and studies; information and communication	86	602,960	2.00%
TOTAL		30,148,017	100.00%

6. IMPLEMENTATION PROVISIONS

6.1 COOPERATION STRUCTURES

According to the principle of segregation of duties, the provisions for the implementation of this OP will be in line with article 58(b) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, with the aim of guaranteeing the effective and correct implementation, the correct functioning of the management and control system and the monitoring functions, the common cooperation organs for the implementation of the Programme, as provided for in Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 and in the European Parliament and the Council Regulation EC/1080/2006, and following the decisions taken by the co-responsible Administrations, are:

- the Managing Authority;
- the Maltese National Coordination Authority;
- the Joint Technical Secretariat;
- the Certifying Authority;
- the Audit Authority;
- the Monitoring Committee;
- the Executive Committee.

6.1.1 MANAGING AUTHORITY

The Managing Authority, hereafter referred to as the MA, according to article 59 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 and article 14 of Regulation EC/1080/2006, is the Sicilian Region, appointed by agreement of the co-responsible Administrations for the Programme.

This office's responsibility is the 'pro-tempore' Head of the following structure:

*Ufficio Speciale per la cooperazione decentrata
allo sviluppo ed alla solidarietà internazionale*

Piazza Sturzo, 36 - 90100 Palermo

E-mail: apiceno@regione.sicilia.it

Tel: 0039 - 091 7070 253

Fax: 0039 – 091 7070 054

Website: www.interreg-italiamalta.org

Website: www.regione.sicilia.it

The MA is responsible for the management and implementation of the OP according to the principle of sound financial management.

The MA is also responsible, to the Commission, for the completion of the tasks outlined in the Programme in conjunction with article 60 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 and article 15 of Regulation EC/1080/2006, and by specific article 13 of Commission Regulation EC/1828/2006; in particular:

- Guaranteeing the selection of the operations to be financed according to the criteria of the Operational Programme and in accordance with the Community and National rules for the whole implementation period;
- Guaranteeing the existence of a computer system for the record and storage of the data relevant to each operation carried out by the OP and the collection of the relevant implementation's data, necessary for financial accounting, monitoring, control and audit checks and assessment;
- Ensuring that the beneficiaries and the other interested organisations maintain a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting codification for all the transactions relevant to the operation in accordance with the national accounting rules;
- Guaranteeing the assessment of the Operational Programme, article 48(3) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 to be developed according to article 47 of the same Regulation;
- Setting out procedures regarding the safe keeping of all documents relevant to the expenditures and their audit and to guarantee an adequate audit trail according to article 90 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 (three years successive to the programme's closure);
- Guaranteeing that the Certifying Authority receives all the necessary information about the procedures and checks carried out concerning all expenditures and their certification;
- Leading the Monitoring Committee's work and transferring to it the documents to allow a quality monitoring of the OP's implementation in tune with specific objectives;
- Elaborating and presenting to the Commission, after the approval of the Monitoring Committee, the yearly and final execution's reports;
- Guaranteeing compliance with the obligations about information and advertising according to article 69 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006;
- Transferring to the Commission the information to allow the evaluation of large projects;
- Responsible to the EU for the Programme;
- Ensuring that the expenditures of each beneficiary participating in each operation, have been validated by the auditor as provided for in article 16(1) of the European Parliament and the Council Regulation EC/1080/2006;
- Agreeing and signing the ERDF convention with the Lead partner;
- Appointing those responsible for the publicity of the information and advertising and informing the Commission accordingly (article 10 of Commission Regulation EC/1828/2006).

In order to develop its offices of management and implementation of the Operational Programme, the Managing Authority is assisted by a Joint Technical Secretariat (article 14 of Regulation EC/1080/2006) established after a consultation among the representative Member States in the programme's zone and constituted by adequate human and material resources.

In order to provide the Certifying Authority with all the information regarding the controls and the checks on the eligibility of expenditure, with particular reference to article 60(b) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, the Managing Authority avails itself of the Administrations co-responsible for the Programme.

6.1.2 MALTESE NATIONAL COORDINATION AUTHORITY

As a Member State in this programme, Malta will take charge through two specific functions:

- A regulatory function related to the responsibility of each Member State as regards monitoring and control on reality of expenses¹;
- A function of animation of the implementation of the programme on national territory and a contribution to the general animation of the program in relation with the MA and the JTS to which they entrusted management.

Responsibility for this function pertains to the pro-tempore officer within the structure indicated hereunder:

Planning and Priorities Coordination Division
Office of the Prime Minister
12, St. Paul's Street,
Valletta, VLT1210
Malta
E-mail: info.ppcd@gov.mt
Website: www.ppcd.gov.mt
Tel: 00356 2200 1142
Fax: 00356 2200 1141

6.1.3 JOINT TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

The Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) acts as the technical operational body assisting the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority, the Monitoring Committee (according to article 14 of Regulation EC/1080/2006), the Steering Committee (established according to article 19 of Regulation EC/1080/2006) and, if necessary, the Audit Authority.

The Joint Technical Secretariat functions within the Managing Authority and the personnel will be selected through a public call.

The JTS deals with the following tasks:

- Assisting the Managing Authority in its administrative tasks;
- To act as Contact Point for the Maltese National Coordinating Authority
- To support the Executive Committee in project selection and evaluation activities as well as to support possible regional/national experts who could be involved in the project evaluation and selection process.
- Preparing all the necessary documents for the correct development of the Monitoring Committee's meetings and carries out the secretariat's task for the Managing Authority;
- Preparing and arranging all the necessary documents for the project's implementation (application form for subvention, guidelines for community contributions, guidelines for

¹ Article 16 of the EU regulation n°1080/2006 and article 70 of the EU Regulation n°1083/2006.

eligibility, reporting forms, reference terms of reference/calls, ERDF convention between the Managing Authority and the Lead partner and convention between the Lead partner and the project partners;

- Managing the ERDF conventions for the Managing Authority;
- Acquiring from the Programme partner Administrations the list of the possible national/regional experts involved in the evaluation and selection process of the projects;
- Providing the technical support for the identification of project selection criteria, the preparatory work in connection with the tendering process and the evaluation of project proposals;
- Verifying the reports of the project's Lead partner;
- Archiving the Programme's documents;
- Managing and updating the monitoring system, keeping the data relevant to the earmarked funds and their expenditures (financial monitoring), to the implementation stage (physical monitoring) and to the procedural phases of the projects (procedural monitoring); preparing the documents and the information for monitoring, collecting the reports about the projects' state of advance submitted by the Lead partners;
- Writing all the reports about the Programme's development and submitting them to the Managing Authority;
- Preparing the financial and statistic data for the Monitoring Committee, the European Commission and the representatives of the Member States;
- Supporting the Managing Authority to write and implement the communication plan and to carry out information and publicity measures, acting also as cross-border information and animation point for the potential projects' representatives and promoting animations' activities for the mobilization of the partnerships;
- Promoting the territorial animation and the awareness of the cooperation.

In order to contrast the insularity problems, an info point will be assigned to Malta with the main duties relating to the information, awareness, the promotion of animation, assisting local partners and promoting ongoing projects.

6.1.4 CERTIFYING AUTHORITY

The Certifying Authority is responsible for the correct certification of the expenditures allocated for the Programme's implementation and for the payment requests to be sent to the Commission.

The Certifying Authority in conformity with article 59 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 and article 14 of Regulation EC/1080/2006 is established in the Sicilian Region and its authority is entrusted to the designated person in charge of the following structure:

Presidenza della Regione Siciliana - Ufficio Speciale dell'Autorità di Certificazione
Piazza Sturzo n. 36 Palermo
E-mail: ludovico.benfante@regione.sicilia.it
Tel: 0039 091 7070 007
Fax: 0039 091 7070 152

The Certifying Authority, according to Council Regulation EC/1803/2006 and according to the implementation method of Commission Regulation EC/1828/2006, is in charge of the following tasks:

- Receiving the payments effected by the Commission and, as a general rule, effecting the payments to the lead partner (article 14(1) of Regulation EC/1080/2006);
- Elaborating and transferring to the Commission the declared certifications of the expenditures and payment requests;
- Certifying that:
 - (1) Declarations of expenditure are correct, emanate from a reliable accounting system and are based on verifiable supporting documents;
 - (2) The declared expenditure is in accordance with the Community and national rules and has been affected in connection with the selected operations, according to the criteria applicable to the programme and to the community and national rules;
- As regards certification guaranteeing the receipt from the Managing Authority of adequate information about the developed procedures and the checks effected, with reference to the declarations of expenditure;
- Considering the results of all the audit activities carried out by the Audit Authority or under its authority;
- Maintaining computer accounting records of the expenditures declared to the Commission;
- Keeping trace of recoverable amounts and amounts withdrawn after the total or partial defection from an operation. The recovered amounts are refunded to the general budget of the European Union before the Programme's closing, by way of a deduction from the subsequent declaration of expenditure;
- Ensuring that all amounts, paid as a result of irregularities, are recovered by the principal LP;
- If the Lead Partner cannot obtain reimbursement from a beneficiary, the latter's share must be refunded by the Member State which ensures territorial competence over the beneficiary (article 17(3) of Regulation EC/1080/2006).

In compliance with its duties and functions, the Certifying Authority will avail itself of information provided by the co-responsible administrations, through the Managing Authority. The tasks and duties of the Certifying Authority will be detailed in the implementation Guide.

6.1.5 AUDIT AUTHORITY

The Audit Authority is responsible for the control and the effective functioning of the management and control system. In conformity with article 59 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 and article 14 of Regulation EC/1080/2006 the duties of the Audit Authority are assigned to the pro-tempore head of the under-mentioned unit:

*Presidenza della Regione Siciliana - Ufficio Speciale per i Controlli di
Secondo Livello sulla gestione dei fondi strutturali in Sicilia*

Via Notarbartolo n. 12/A Palermo

E-mail: autorita.audit@regione.sicilia.it

Tel: 0039 091 7077 544

Fax: 0039 091 7077 556

As prescribed by article 58(b) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, the appointed Audit Authority is functionally independent both from the Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority, according to the principle of separation of duties among such entities.

In accordance with article 62 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 the Audit Authority is in charge of the following tasks:

- Guarantees that the audit function in activities are developed to ensure the effective functioning of the managing and control system of the OP;
- Guarantees that the audit activities are developed on an adequate sample of operations for the control of the declared expenditures;
- Presents to the Commission, within nine months from the approval of the OP, a strategic audit plan involving the organisations indicated to carry out the audit function in relation to a) and b), the methodology to be applied, the method of sampling to be used as part of the audit of operations and the proposed plan of audit activities in order to ensure that the principal organisations are subject to audit and that such activities are uniformly applied during the entire programming period;
- Not later than 31st December of each year, from 2008 to 2013 –
 - i. To submit annually to the Commission a control report showing the results obtained from the audit activities performed during the preceding 12 month period that ends on 30th June of the year in question in conformity with the strategic audit plan for the operational programme and highlighting the deficiencies discovered in the management and control systems of the programme. The information in respect of the audit activities affected after the 1st July 2015 will be included in the final control report in support of the final declaration of closure in terms of para. (e);
 - ii. To express an opinion, on the basis of the controls and the audit activities performed under his/her charge, as to the effective functioning of the management and control system, indicating whether the system provides reasonable guarantees as to the correctness of the items of expenditure presented to the Commission and as regards the legitimacy and regularity of the underlying transactions;
 - iii. To present, in those cases referred to in article 88, a declaration of partial closure as to the legitimacy and regularity of the expenditure in question.
- Submit to the European Commission by 31 December of each year from 2008 to 2015, an annual control report setting out the findings of the audits carried out during the previous 12 month-period ending 30th June of the year concerned in accordance with the audit strategy of the OP and report any shortcomings found in the systems for the management and control of the Programme;
- Issue an opinion, on the basis of the controls and audits that have been carried out under its responsibility, as to whether the management and control system functions effectively, so as to provide a reasonable assurance that statements of expenditure presented to the European Commission are correct and as a consequence reasonable assurance that the underlying transactions are legal and regular;
- Presents to the Commission within the 31st of March 2017, a final declaration regarding the validity of the final payment request and the legitimacy and regularity of the examined

transactions covered by the final declaration of expenditures, together with a final control report.

The Audit Authority guarantees that the audit function is exercised according to international standards and, in case these tasks are entrusted to outside organisations for which the audit authority is not directly responsible, it further guarantees that the audit firms are functionally independent and free from any conflict of interests.

The Audit Authority as per article 14 of Regulation EC/1080/2006 can be assisted by a group of controllers, formed by representatives from both Member States, who will carry out the duties as stipulated in article 62 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006. The Group of Auditors, led by the Audit Authority, will carry out its functions according to an internal regulation established accordingly.

6.1.6 MONITORING COMMITTEE

According to the provisions of articles 63, 64, 65, 66, 67 and 68 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, the Monitoring Committee of the OP Territorial Cooperation Italy-Malta assumes its responsibilities within three months from the date of notice to the Member State of the approval of the operational programme.

The Monitoring Committee shall be composed by an equal number of Italian and Maltese members who shall be nominated by the Programme Partners and shall have the right to vote. The latter also applies to representatives of environmental and equal opportunities authorities. The Italian members shall also include representatives at a local, regional and national level. On the other hand, the Maltese side should include representatives at a national level.

In conformity with article 64 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, a representative of the Commission can participate in the Committee's activities in a consultative capacity and without any voting rights. Such representatives can participate on their own initiative or at the request of the Monitoring Committee.

At such meetings, the following can participate in a consultative capacity and without voting rights:

- The Certifying Authority;
- The Audit Authority;
- The Joint Technical Secretariat;
- A representative of the Managing Authority of the relative OPs (ERDF) for Sicily and Malta;
- Two representatives each, for Sicily and Malta, from the institutional partnership;
- Two representatives, including one from the socio-economic partnership and one from the third sector, per Member State.

The Presidency of the Committee can also invite:

- Reference people for the Programmes ESF, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development EAFRD and EFF involving the cross-border area;
- The independent auditor of the Programme;
- Experts to deal with specific themes.

The Monitoring Committee is in charge of checking on the effectiveness and quality of the Programme's implementation. In this respect it:

- Examines and approves any proposal to modify the OP, including the physical and financial indicators to be used in the OP surveillance, it expresses an obligatory and binding opinion about its modifications and proposes them to the Managing Authority;
- Examines and approves, within 6 months from the approval of the OP, the selection criteria of the financed operations and approves every revision of such criteria, according to the programming needs;
- Establishes the Executive Committee;
- Approves the Technical Assistance plan;
- Evaluates periodically the progress made in the achievement of the specific objectives of the OP on the basis of the documents presented by the Managing Authority;
- Examines the execution's results and in particular, the achievement of the objectives set for each priority axis, and the evaluation of article 48(3) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006;
- Examines and approves the yearly and final execution set in article 67 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006;
- Is informed about the yearly control Report and the possible observations expressed about it by the Commission;
- Can propose to the Managing Authority any revision or examination of the OP, as long as it is in line with the Funds' objectives;
- Examines and approves any proposal of modifications about the content of the Commission's decision relevant to the Funds' participation;
- Approves the Communication Plan, prepared by the Managing Authority with the support of the Joint Technical Secretariat;
- Approves the institution of eventual working groups that can be set up with the intent of dealing with issues related to the realisation of the OP.

The Managing Authority, availing itself of the operational support of the Joint Technical Secretariat, shall convene, prepare and manage the Committee's meetings in order to ensure the fulfilment of the tasks assigned.

The Committee meets at least once a year in Italy and Malta alternatively and shall be supported by the Joint Technical Secretariat in its functions. The chairmanship is assigned, in turn, according on the place where the meeting is held.

For the performance and validity of the Committee's work, the presence of the absolute majority of the members with power of decision for each national part as requested.

The Committee's decisions are made by consensus and both the Italian and English languages will be used (as well as Maltese upon request).

During its first meeting the Monitoring Committee approves an internal regulation which defines the modalities as to how its tasks will be carried out.

6.1.7 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Committee will establish an internal Executive Committee for the selection of the projects, according to article 19 of the European Parliament and the Council Regulation EC/1080/2006.

Hence, the Executive Committee is the 'partnership' technical structure which supports the Managing Authority in the implementation of the Programme. In particular, the Executive Committee carries out the following tasks it:

- Proposes to the Monitoring Committee, with the support of the Joint Technical Secretariat, the criteria to be adopted for project selection, in order to procure its definitive approval;
- Elaborates the Guide for the implementation, with the support of the JTS, which defines the modalities of presentation, instruction and monitoring;
- Is responsible for the selection of the projects and shall avail itself of the operational support of the JTS;
- Is informed about the activities of the Managing, Certifying and Audit Authorities.

The Executive Committee consists of:

- A representative of the Managing Authority;
- A representative of the Maltese National Coordinating Authority;
- A representative of the Sicilian environmental Authority and a representative of the Maltese ministry responsible for the environment as well as representatives of the Monitoring Committee;
- A representative from each Member State responsible for Equal Opportunities.

The Joint Technical Secretariat shall participate at the meetings of the Executive Committee, which shall take place at least once a year. When necessary, representatives from other Operational Programmes of both Member States will be invited to participate to ensure complementarity of the proposed activities with those funded under other Community Initiatives and Programmes and avoid that any activities get double financing.

The internal regulation of the Executive Committee will specify its own rules. In particular, the principal rules are:

- Decisions are made by consensus;
- The languages used are Italian and English;
- The chairmanship is ensured by the Managing Authority.

6.2 IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

6.2.1 IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

All the projects will be implemented according to the *Lead Partner* principle, as indicated in article 20(1) of the European Parliament and the Council Regulation EC/1080/2006.

In accordance with article 19 of the same Regulation EC/1080/2006 the projects will have to be elaborated at least according to two of the following modalities:

- Joint elaboration,
- Joint implementation,
- Joint staff, and
- Joint financing.

The planning typologies can be both:

- Strategic projects
- Ordinary projects

Strategic projects

Strategic projects represent a complex planning typology, strongly centred on the strategy and the general objective of the Programme; because of their features, such projects are implemented by solid partnerships, deal with a wide portion of the eligible territory and are able to generate significant effects in the cooperation area even after the end of the Programme.

Hence, the strategic projects are configured as joint actions of investment, directly promoted by the co-responsible Administrations, aimed at the lasting valorisation of some of the strategic resources and potentialities of the cooperation area.

They represent an intervention model applicable for the strengthening and the valorisation of network infrastructures and resources to be managed commonly and with joint actions.

The co-responsible Administrations, or the implementing subjects delegated by them will be in charge of the project elaboration. In case of delegation, the management is assigned to a reliable public entity, which deals with all the management, communication and visibility aspects.

The necessary requirements concerning strategic projects as well the selection procedure concerned shall be specified in the *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme*.

Ordinary Projects

The Ordinary Projects are specific proposals concerning a defined area and comply with the requirements of article 19 of Regulation EC/1080/2006.

The Ordinary Projects are featured by the following elements:

- They include beneficiaries from Italy and Malta;
- The beneficiaries have to cooperate in at least two of the following modalities: joint elaboration; joint implementation; joint staff; joint financing.

6.2.2 SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

The procedures to implement the projects are the following:

- Public notice;
- Negotiated procedure.

Public notice

This procedure provides for the publication, in Italian and English, of a public notice by the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority of the Programme coordinates its activities with the National Maltese Authority in order to give wide publicity to the Public notice on the relevant territory.

The notice can provide for a fixed deadline for the presentation of projects, or an open presentation procedure, with periodical evaluation of the presented projects.

The ordinary projects are selected by public notices.

For the selection of the projects, in response to the public notices, the applications must be presented using appropriate forms, which will be available in advance and published on an appropriate *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme*, prepared by the MA with the support of the JTS which should be available in Italian and English.

The proposals can be written in Italian or English, with the summary of the project in the other language.

The proposals will be initially checked by the Joint Technical Secretariat in order to verify that the formal admittance requirements are present.

Subsequently, the eligible proposals will be evaluated by the Joint Technical Secretariat, with the possible participation of external experts and later checked and approved by the Steering Committee on the basis of general criteria, previously approved by the Monitoring Committee.

Negotiated Procedure

The procedure for the generation of strategic projects is based on specific dialogue modalities as well as agreement through consultation amongst stakeholders representing cross-border territories (Managing Authority and Maltese National Coordinating Authority) together with the operational support of the JTS.

With respect to the selection of strategic projects, such as those based on public notices, proposals will have to be presented in Italian or English and should include a summary in the other language.

In accordance with article 19 of Regulation EC/1080/2006, the selected operations for the Programme should at least include beneficiaries from both countries which collaborate in conformity with at least two of the following criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint staff and joint financing.

Eligible proposals shall be evaluated by the Executive Committee, together with the support of the Joint Technical Secretariat, possibly, also including the involvement of external experts, thus ensuring selection based upon general criteria approved beforehand by the Monitoring Committee.

Details concerning the negotiation procedure shall be specified in the *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme*.

6.2.3 THE LEAD PARTNER'S ROLE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

According to article 20 of the European Parliament and the Council Regulation EC/1080/2006, for each operation, the beneficiaries appoint a lead partner, which assumes the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring the development of the whole operation;
- It defines the modalities of its own relationships with the participant beneficiaries through an agreement which will include the provisions to guarantee the good financial management of the funds, including the mechanism to recover the amounts wrongly spent;
- It guarantees that the expenditures declared by the beneficiaries have been paid to develop the operation and correspond to the activities arranged among the same beneficiaries;
- It checks on the validation, from the auditors, of the expenditures declared by the beneficiaries;
- On the basis of the certifications produced by each beneficiary, it elaborates the information and the relevant declarations of expenditures for the Managing Authority to be forwarded to the Certifying Authority;
- It is in charge of the transfer of the ERDF contribution to the beneficiaries participating in the operation.

6.2.4 PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMME

The programme contemplates the participation of public entities, private organisations, universities, research institutes, NGO's, public consortia and public/private partnerships.

The modalities for the participation of private entities, and in general "economic operators"* , as well as the pertaining provision of financing, shall be subject to specific guidance provided by the *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme*. These entities can participate given that they realise joint cross-border activities from which both the project and the cooperation area stand to benefit.

Moreover, for each and every project, participation by economic operators must be in strict conformity with community and national State Aid rules (exemption rules for "de minimis" assistance). In view of this requirement, in the case of the supply of services for activities linked to projects, the selected firms must comply with set procedures relating to public information. In order to avoid eventual conflicts of interest, the firms/companies cannot enter into any contracts for the supply of services relative to the implementation of the same project.

In so far as it concerns organisations "non-profit"** , these can participate in the project so long as their contribution is to the advantage of the cross-border approach of the project.

Nonetheless, it is envisaged that the *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme* shall specify the eligibility criteria that need to be followed by the Lead Partner as well as the final beneficiaries with respect to their participation in various projects.

*In accordance with Article 1(8) of EU Directive EU 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council dated 31st March 2004, regarding the harmonization of adjudication procedures of public tenders for works, supplies and services, an "economic operator" is considered to be that physical or judicial person or a public entity or a group of such persons and/or entities which offer on the market, respectively, the execution of works and/or activities, products or services. For this purpose, the rules regarding competition do not apply on the basis of the legal status of each institution involved (public or private), but on the basis of the nature of realized activities.

**A "non-profit" organization is one whose primary objective is to support a theme of public or private interest but invariably always tied to non-commercial purposes. Such organizations can make profits so long as these are re-invested in the activities in which they operate.

6.3 MONITORING, CONTROL AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

According to article 66 of the General Regulation 1083/2006, the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee are responsible for the effective execution of the Operational Programme. They ensure the supervision of the Programme through a series of financial and target indicators.

According to article 67 of the same regulation, for the first time in 2008 and subsequently on the 30th June of each year, the Managing Authority transmits to the Commission an annual report and, not later than the 31st March 2017, a final report on the execution of the Programme.

Such reports will contain a series of data to enable the clear verification of the implementation of the Programme:

- the progress achieved in the implementation of the OP and the priority axes in relation to their verifiable specific objectives, proceeding as and when possible to a quantification, utilising the indicators set in article 37(c) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, at the priority axes level;
- the financial execution of the Programme;
- exclusively for the sake of information, the indicative allocation of the funds by category, in conformity with the modalities of application adopted by the Commission, in accordance with the procedure set in article 103(3) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006;
- the dispositions selected by the Managing Authority or by the Monitoring Committee to ensure the quality and effectiveness of implementation;
- the data in relation to major problems in community rules which have been encountered during the course of implementation of the OP, as well as the remedial measures taken in this respect;
- the utilisation of funds recovered as a result of a revocation in accordance with article 98(2) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, by the Managing Authority or by another public authority during the course of implementation of the OP.

6.3.1 MONITORING

The Managing Authority guarantees the activation and the correct functioning of the computer monitoring system.

The system adopted shall be in either Italian or English and shall ensure prompt access to information by the Maltese National Coordinating Authority.

The system provides for:

1. The process of identification of projects approved for financing;
2. Their recording in the data collection system;
3. The modalities to bring to account physical, financial and procedural data;
4. The periodical reporting of progress aggregated by priority axes and by line of action.

The Managing Authority will apply the measures that may be considered necessary so that the data furnished by the Administrations involved in the programme and/or by the beneficiaries responsible for the implementation of the various projects, will be subject to a proper audit and control process which will guarantee the correctness, dependability and congruence of monitoring data in accordance with the following modalities:

- a. **Financial Monitoring** of the data with reference to the effective disbursements to meet expenditure, which data will be sourced at project level and subsequently aggregated at priority axes level. The financial monitoring will be updated every three months;
- b. **Physical Monitoring** through the gathering of data at project level with regard to the progress registered on each operation utilizing the pertinent indicators set in the Programme;
- c. **Procedural Monitoring** undertaken on the basis of the schedule of implementation of typical works and specified procedures of implementation;
- d. **Reporting and Information** – monitoring data, aggregated as is necessary will be submitted in a form agreed upon by the Programme partners, the Ministry of Economic Development and the Commission at each meeting of the Monitoring Committee and inserted on the website of the Programme.

The informative supply relevant to each single operation (project/intervention) is periodically transferred to the National Monitoring System which makes available the data for the European Commission and the citizens, in the representation formats and standards suitable to guarantee homogeneous and transparent information.

The monitoring system interfaces with the national systems implemented for the monitoring of the Territorial Cooperation objective.

The provisions for the monitoring will be included in the decisional acts. In case of particular needs, it is foreseen that specific actions of technical assistance will be activated.

The provisions for the monitoring will be included in the decisional acts (e.g. conventions with the beneficiaries). In case of particular needs, it will be possible to implement specific actions of technical assistance.

6.3.2 EVALUATION

The evaluation's purpose is to improve the quality, the effectiveness and the coherence of the OP, apart from the strategy and the implementation, considering the specific structural problems of the cooperation zone and taking into account the sustainable development objective and the relevant community regulation as far as regards the environmental impact and the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Under the supervision of the Technical Group responsible for the preparation of the programme, an ex-ante evaluation of the OP has been effected, together with the Strategic Environmental Assessment, contextually with the preparation phase of the programming document. The implementation of the OP will go along with both strategic and operational intermediate evaluations, in order to examine the development of the programme compared with the community and national priorities and to sustain the programme's monitoring.

The evaluation plan of the Programme will follow the deadlines as shown hereunder:

EVALUATION PLAN	
ACTIVITY	DEADLINE
Ex-ante evaluation	January 2008
Intermediate evaluation	June 2010
1st update	June 2012
2nd update	June 2014
Ex-Post evaluation	31st December 2017

Should a significant detachment from the fixed objectives be detected as a result of a monitoring exercise, or if a proposal for a revision of the OP is necessary, in accordance with the article 33 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, an operational intermediate evaluation will be effected.

The intermediate evaluations, to be effected on the basis of the method indications and the quality standards provided by the services of the Commission in the Work Document n. 5 “Evaluation during the programming period”, are still decided according to the principle of proportionality, in accordance with the Commission and, in any case, in accordance with application modalities of the general regulation EC/1083/2006.

The evaluations are financed through the resources of the measure for the technical assistance and are effected by experts or organs functionally independent from the certification and audit authorities.

For the evaluation activity, the Managing authority avails itself of the collaboration of the Maltese National Coordinating Authority and a combination of both external and internal professionals (e.g. the JTS), in order to ensure a high quality, making good use of the evaluation as a management tool.

The results of the evaluations (Evaluation Reports) are presented to the Monitoring Committee². The Monitoring Committee is responsible for the analysis of the evaluation report drafts and the approval of their final versions, before their delivery to the Commission.

The Commission makes an ex-post evaluation in accordance with Council Regulation EC/1083/2006 which will be undertaken by 31st December 2017.

² Article 48 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006.

6.3.3 FIRST LEVEL CONTROLS

The *Regione Sicilia* and the Maltese National Coordinating Authority are responsible for first level control activities.

Such control can be carried out by independent controllers selected by means of public notice procedures thus being identified from within the Maltese and Sicilian Public Administrations.

In accordance with article 16 of the European Parliament and the Council Regulation EC/1080/2006, each Member State shall, with the aim of validating expenses, put in place a control system which provides for the verification of co-financed goods and services acquired. Such a control system shall verify the veracity of expenses for operations or parts of operations carried out on the respective territories as well their conformity with community as well as national and regional regulations.

The modalities for the implementation of first level controls shall be presented in the *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme*.

6.3.4 SECOND LEVEL CONTROLS

This activity is led by the Audit Authority, which may be assisted by a group of controllers, composed of one representative per Member State, which shall carry out functions provided for by article 62 of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006. The Group of controllers, led by the Audit Authority, shall carry out its functions in accordance with an internal regulations established accordingly.

The Audit Authority shall ensure that:

- the controls are performed in order to verify the effective working of the management and control system;
- the operational controls are performed on the basis of adequate sampling in order to verify the expenditure declared.

6.3.5 MANAGEMENT OF IRREGULARITIES

Each time the Managing Authority of the OP, through the control actions of the auditors of the co-responsible Administrations and/or the second level audit, finds out an irregularity, according to the article 2(7) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, object of a previous administrative check, it informs the Commission with the modalities established by Commission Implementing Regulation EC/1828/2006 within two months following the end of each quarter, by means of an appropriate form.

The Certifying Authority keeps the accounts of the amounts recovered or to be recovered with reference to the payments already effected in the OP. According to the article 61(f) of Council Regulation EC/1083/2006, the recovered amounts are given back to the European Commission, deducting them from the subsequent declaration of expenditure. Both the revoked or recovered amounts and the punctual development of the procedures are monitored by the informative system and the Commission is provided with the due information.

The Managing Authority, through the co-responsible Administrations, arranges the recovery of the amounts irregularly paid on the OP and the possible measure of total or partial revocation of the engagement and/or payment and communicates it to the Certifying Authority, which enters the amount subject to financial correction in the accounts.

Further information concerning reports and the flow of information between the Authorities provided for by the Programme shall be included in the *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme*.

6.4 ORGANIZATION OF FINANCIAL FLOWS

6.4.1 THE RESOURCES' MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

ERDF CONTRIBUTION

According to article 82 of the General Regulation EC/1083/2006, the Commission approves the transfer of a contribution (the pre-financing amount) from the Funds to the OP as soon as there is the Commission decision approval on the same OP.

Transfer modalities concerning the advance payment to the responsible Maltese Authority shall be specified in the *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme*.

Further payments by the Commission are activated by the payment requests presented by the Certifying Authority.

Subsequently, the European Commission, transfers the ERDF funds relative to the Programme to the credit of the Certifying Authority through the *Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze* in the single account no. 23211 opened at the Central Treasury of the State and bearing the title "Ministry of the Treasury, Budget and Economic Programming – Revolving fund for the implementation of community policies".

The procedure of the Sicilian Regions' accounts deals with the management of the ERDF contribution and the financial flows coming from the Community programming.

The Lead partner or the Administration responsible for the interventions, through the Managing Authority, files a request to the Certifying Authority for the payment of the ERDF share, specifying the total national and regional share and the possible paid amount of the same.

Then, the Certifying Authority puts into effect the procedures to transfer the relevant Community share to the final beneficiaries.

On the basis of the *'Implementation Guide'* and checking on the actual funds availability, the Certifying Authority can pay the ERDF share before the actual reimbursement from the European Commission.

NATIONAL PUBLIC FINANCING

Italy -

In the case of Italy, the state co-financing (CPN) for the whole Programme is equivalent to 100% of the Italian co-financing, as stipulated by the Interministerial Economic Planning Committee – IEPC – deliberation. IGRUE transfers to the Certifying Authority the corresponding amounts of national co-financing in accordance with the established procedures of law no. 183/1987.

The Regione Sicilia approves its own National Co-financing (CPN) and enters it in its proper budget allocation together with the Government quota. Above all, the allocations representing the public contributions by both the central and regional Governments are listed under specific heads of expenditure with particular reference to the Programme, in order to ensure the transparent management of such financial contributions.

Malta -

In the case of Malta, the State guarantees to cover the co-financing element, according to the respective local financial regulations with respect to Territorial Cooperation Programmes 2007-2013.

6.4.1.1 Entity Responsible for the Receipt of Payments

The entity responsible for receiving payments by the Commission on behalf of the regional Administration is:

Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze - Dipartimento della Ragioneria Generale dello Stato - Ispettorato Generale per i Rapporti con l'Unione Europea (I.G.R.U.E.),

Address: Via XX Settembre, 97-00187, Roma

E-mail: rgs.segreteria.igrue@tesoro.it

Community contributions shall be provided to I.G.R.U.E. by means the single account no. 23211 opened at the Central Treasury of the State and bearing the title "Ministry of the Treasury, Budget and Economic Programming – Revolving fund for the implementation of community policies".

The competent office provides for the management of financial resources assigned to the OP on the basis of Community, national and regional administrative and accounting legislation as well as criteria for sound financial management.

6.4.1.2 Entity responsible for the Execution of payments

The entity responsible for the execution of payments is:

Assessorato regionale Bilancio e Finanze – Dipartimento Bilancio a Tesoro

Address: Via Notarbartolo n.17 Palermo

E-mail: dirigente.bilancio@regione.sicilia.it

6.4.2 AUTOMATED DATA EXCHANGE

The data exchange among the Managing Authority, the Italian central Administration responsible for the financial relationships with the EU and the European Commission, as far as regards the monitoring data, the estimate of expenditure and the payments requests, is effected electronically, through the use of *web services* provided by the community system SFC 2007.

The *web services* of the system SFC 2007 works through the national Informative system managed by the *Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze - Dipartimento della Ragioneria Generale dello Stato - Ispettorato Generale per i Rapporti con l'Unione Europea (I.G.R.U.E.)*, which grants the coordination of the informative flows towards the Community system SFC 2007.

The involved subjects of the co-responsible Administrations, including the Maltese National Coordinating Authority, can access to the functionalities of the SFC system, through the I.G.R.U.E. system, according to defined keys and authorization, on the basis of the relevant competences and responsibilities.

6.4.3 THE FINANCIAL EXECUTION OF THE OPERATIONS

The procedure for the financial execution of the transfer of funds to the final beneficiaries shall be specified in the *Implementation Guidelines of the Programme*.

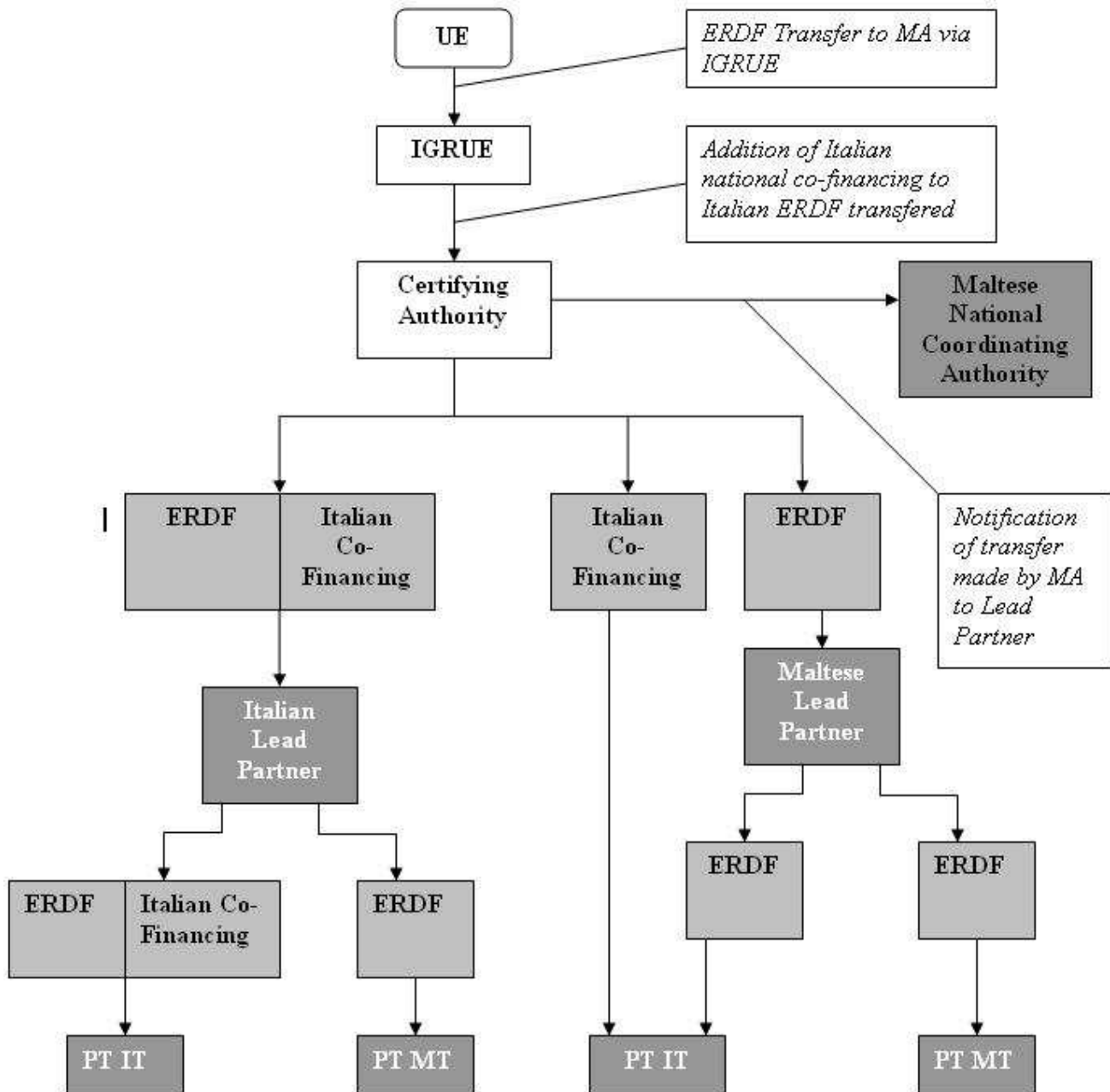
A) FINANCIAL CIRCUIT FOR ITALIAN LEAD PARTNERS

1. The European Commission transfers the ERDF funds, relative to the programme for the benefit of the Certifying Authority through IGRUE, who adds on the corresponding contributions co-financed by the Italian state to the revolving fund as per law no. 183/1987;
2. The Certifying Authority transfers the ERDF contribution and the co-financing contributions by the Italian state to the Italian Lead Partner;
3. The Italian Lead Partner transfers (remits) the ERDF contribution and the natural co-financing contributions to the Italian beneficiaries and exclusively the ERDF contribution to the Maltese beneficiaries.

B) FINANCIAL CIRCUIT FOR MALTESE LEAD PARTNERS

1. The EC transfers the ERDF payments relative to the programme to the Certifying Authority through IGRUE, who adds on the corresponding amounts of co-financing by the Italian state to the credit of the Revolving Fund as per law 183/1987;
2. The Certifying Authority transfers the ERDF contribution to the Maltese Lead Partner and the Italian beneficiaries the element of the national co-financing due to them;
3. The Lead Partner allocates the ERDF quota to Maltese and Italian beneficiaries.

6.5 FINANCIAL FLOW



7. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS OF THE HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

The OP guarantees the total respect of the horizontal community principles. For such purposes, the *in itinere* evaluation will be deepened as far as it concerns the equal opportunities and sustainable development themes; such matters will be also dealt in the sphere of the Monitoring Committee and in the yearly execution reports.

The modalities for the integration of the horizontal principles, in the implementation phase of the Programme, are the following:

7.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Administrations involved in the OP, bind themselves to guarantee the actual implementation of the community principle of equal opportunities in the programming, development and evaluation of the interventions, through several concrete actions, that are:

- Integration of the equal opportunity principles in the implementation dispositions, as the participation in the Monitoring Committee of the equal opportunity representatives for both the Member States and the possibility to carry out specific information about any consequential negative results produced by the Programme progress on the gender theme;
- Where relevant, definition of selection criteria for the projects, aimed at the active pursuit of the equal opportunities objective and where pertinent, relevant participation of the national/regional representatives in the selection process;
- Participation of the national/regional representatives with the advisors in the Steering Committee meetings as far as the dealt themes require their presence;
- Specific attention on such theme in the definition and implementation of the communication campaigns and the territorial animation actions.

7.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In line with the new European Strategy for Sustainable Development (Gothenburg Agenda) the OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013 ensures the pursuit of the principles of sustainable development established by the said strategy. In fact, the OP allocates a central role in the strategy to some of the principal issues listed in the Gothenburg Agenda, namely: climate change and energy, sustainable transport, production and sustainable consumption, as well as conservation and management of natural resources.

In the implementation phases, the Operational Programme will integrate the environmental sustainability principles, taking into consideration, also in a transversal way, even the priorities foreseen in the LIFE+ Programme and Natura 2000 through several concrete actions, such as:

- Integration of the environmental sustainability principles in the implementation dispositions, through the participation in the Monitoring Committee of the representative of the Sicilian Environmental Authority and a representative of the Maltese Ministry responsible for the environment and the possibility to carry out in the sphere of such meetings specific information

on any negative outcomes caused by the advance of the Programme on the environmental theme.

- Where necessary, definition of selection criteria of the projects oriented to the active pursuit of the environmental sustainability objectives of the interventions and relevant participation in the selection process, where required, of the representative of the Sicilian Environmental Authority and a representative of the Maltese Ministry responsible for the environment.
- As long as the themes are pertinent, advisory participation in the meetings of the Steering Committee of the representative of the Sicilian Environmental Authority and a representative of the Maltese Ministry responsible for the environment.

The role of the Environmental Authority will be to guarantee the environmental integration and to strengthen the orientation towards sustainable development, in all the phases of preparation, implementation and monitoring of the OP, ensuring effectiveness and continuity to the process of Strategic Environmental Assessment. The integration of the principle of the sustainable development, on the Maltese side, will be granted also through a coherence check with the objectives of the *National Strategy for Sustainable Development*.

In any way it is ensured that the operations financed by the OP will be implemented with respect to the EC regulations concerning the Environment, and, in particular, the pertinent rules provided by the EC Treaty.

Finally, according to the Community Strategic Orientations about cohesion for the programming 2007-2013, both Environmental Authorities will be in charge of:

- a) Creating from the sustainable development's point of view, the conditions for the whole integration of the environmental dimension in the processes of evaluation, implementation and monitoring of the OP;
- b) Granting the coherence of the strategies and the programmed actions of the Operational Programme with the environmental policies and in conformity with the community, national and regional environmental regulation;
- c) Granting the evaluation of the matters concerning sustainable development, the protection and improvement of the environment, the preservation of bio-diversity and the natural and cultural heritage;

8. INFORMATION AND ADVERTISING

According to article 60 of the General Regulation EC/1083/2006, the Managing Authority is in charge of controlling compliance with the information and advertising rules, as established in article 69 of the same regulation.

The information and advertising activity aims at the achievement of two general objectives:

- Informing the public opinion about the role carried out by the European Union for regional development and European territorial integration;
- Granting transparency in the decisional processes and the implementing and monitoring modalities of the programme, putting into effect the citizens' right to complete and correct information.

As required by the Commission Implementing Regulation EC/1828/2006, within four months from the approval of the OP, the MA will present to the Commission a communication plan containing all the information about:

- The objectives and the recipient groups;
- The strategy and the content of the advertising and informative interventions addressed to the potential beneficiaries (in phase of calling for the projects presentation), to the beneficiaries (implementing the projects), to the institutional and economic-social partnership and to the public;
- The indicative budget for the implementation of the plan;
- The organs responsible for the implementation of the informative and advertising interventions;
- The modalities to evaluate the informative and advertising interventions in terms of programme visibility and consciousness of the Community's role.

The communication plan will be developed in close collaboration with the *Information Point* established in Malta and shall be articulated in order to target the following categories of beneficiaries:

1. Final beneficiaries (Project proponents);
2. Potential beneficiaries identified in line with the strategic theme of the programme;
3. The institutions: the Regional authorities, local and other competent public authorities;
4. The economic and social partnership: field associations, non-government organizations, trade unions, professional bodies, etc.;
5. The general public.

The communication strategy provides for different channels, depending on the different typologies of public. Each time, the contents will be adapted to the reference context, situation and target, depending on the media chosen to spread the message. The activities will be promoted and implemented both on the eligible areas and on a local level.

The MA, especially through the JTS (and the *Info Point* in Malta), ensures the coordination of information activities, communication, publicity and territorial animation for all those qualified subjects that can eventually present project proposals.

The actions will develop during the whole programming period and depending on their function, will be carried out in the different phases of launching, implementation and closing of the Programme.

Appendix: Summary of Ex-ante and SEA reports

A) EX-ANTE EVALUATION

This Report summarizes the most significant outputs of the ex-ante evaluation's process carried out during the definition of the Operational Programme Italy Malta 2007-2013.

The draft of this document, edited by the Regional Unit for Assessment and Verification of Public Investments - *Nucleo regionale per la Valutazione e la Verifica degli Investimenti pubblici - (NVVIP - Sicilia)*, represents the conclusion of an iterative process which has required a continuative interaction with the Managing Authority appointed to furnish the definition of the OP.

During this process, started on May 2007, the NVVIP Sicilia has acquired all the Programme's drafts from the MA and has written specific observations in four evaluation interim reports³.

The information provided and the suggestions made to enhance the overall quality of the OP have led to the definition of the Programme's final draft, which this report refers to, and whose content appears more cohesive than the previous versions.

The fundamental elements of this report highlight the actual progress and improvements which, according to the assessor, could still be made with the competent institutions during the negotiation process before the definitive approval of the OP.

The main results of the evaluation are given in some detail, as follows.

With regard to the elements of the context analysis and as briefly carried in the SWOT, the definition process of the Programme has contributed towards a good description of the reference context. The related chapter of the Programme fits with its specificity of "Cross-border Cooperation Programme" and is considered pertinent within the ambit of the adopted structure, as well as the degree of detail and the sources of applied data.

Such analysis has provided a sufficiently clear and focused definition of an intervention's strategy, also in terms of coherence with the results of the analysis itself and with the SWOT elements.

In terms of internal coherence, the OP's strategy appears to be well defined. The analysis exercise shows an acceptable grade of logical and functional integration among the objectives at different levels of analysis.

Timely observations have been, however, proposed in order to introduce some corrective actions intended to strengthen further the internal coherence of the OP's objectives. Among the observations expressed, was one regarding the opportunity to consider differently and more explicitly the need of intervention linked to applied research on shared cross-border issues on which the Programme has certain potentialities which should be looked into in-depth, as well as a recommendation to verify the

³ The interim reports have been sent to the Managing Authority respectively on June 26th 2007, September 13th 2007, September 20th 2007.

possibility of a transversal integration of the Governance theme within the sphere of existing thematic objectives.

On the other hand, it seems that the lessons gained from such an experience have addressed the strategy's definition positively, although without a specific *in itinere* evaluation of the OP 2004-06, permitting to focus on a limited number of tangible objectives also in the light of the experience gained from actual implementation.

A genuinely positive opinion can also be expressed as to the coherence of the strategy relative to financial allocations, although, it is also possible to carry out some adjustments which could strengthen the overall consistency of the strategy in terms of the intervention's potentialities.

In so far as the external coherence of the Programme is concerned in comparison to the programming documents to which it refers, and the verification of eventual thematic and/or operational overlapping with other instruments to the socio-economic development, the analysis has kept a good overall adherence to the funding principles of Community programming and a potential synergy-effect between the Programme and the main multi-annual instruments supporting the development of the reference territory.

With regard to the rural development theme, it would be desirable to consider further the possibility of integrating the actions of both programmes.

For this purpose, specific considerations have been made, intended to overcome some possible weaknesses that, if properly taken into account, could strengthen the overall stability of the intervention strategy.

In particular, the usefulness of applying the mechanism of flexibility as dictated by the Community Rules, for the implementation of specific interventions, related to the European Social Fund's field of intervention and complementary to the core actions of the OP, has also been suggested.

The assessment of the OP's potential impact, conducted through a multi-criteria analysis, underlines the overall validity of the strategy with regard to the Programme's objectives. In particular, according to the views of a selected group of experts, there might also be certain systemic effects at territorial level, with special regard to the environmental dimension of the development, and to a lesser extent, the economic one, especially if the 'limited' financial dimension and the specific spheres of intervention of the Programme are taken into account. On the other hand, the anticipated effect appears to be less significant in terms of its contribution towards the strengthening of social and institutional development paths.

Finally, with regard to the implementation assessment of the system and the risks connected to the OP's implementation, the analysis carried out highlights several timely risks in the implementation of the various intervention lines, suggesting, adequate correctional measures, where appropriate. Among the major risks, it is worth mentioning those related to the innovative nature of some intervention lines and the potential difficulty which other actions of intervention could encounter, with regard to the coherence of the current financial allocation that, in some cases, is inadequate to the proposed activities.

B) STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)

The reference law at Community level for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is Directive 2001/42/EC. It has the objective “to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations through the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment”.

By means of procedural note n.425 of 02.04.2007, the Managing Authority, which is responsible for the SEA procedure, formalised its collaboration with the Regional Department for the Territory and Environment – Regional Environment Authority with respect to the activities pertaining to the SEA’s procedural *iter*.

Within this evaluation the process of public participation and consultation is inserted in a horizontal way. Article 6 of the Directive establishes that the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report (including the non-technical summary), shall be made available to the public and those authorities with specific environmental competences that could be interested in the effects on the environment by the application of the Plan/Programme.

Upon definition of the Authorities with specific environmental competences and the Public for the Sicilian Region and the Republic of Malta, the latter were consulted during the decision making process with respect to environment-related information to be included in the Environmental Report as well as the level of detail required during the SEA process (scoping phase).

Documentation will be made available, in Italian and English, on the internet website of the Italy-Malta Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2004-2006 INTERREG IIIA (<http://www.interreg-italiamalta.org>).

At the end of the scoping phase, and after the consultation meeting of the 22nd November 2007 the contributions and observations received from the Regional Agency for the Protection of the Environment (ARPA Sicilia) and the Anti- forest fires special office (Regione Sicilia) by means of the compilation of the set questionnaire, were inserted in the Environment Report, together with the relative explanations as to acceptance or non acceptance.

According to a methodological scheme defined in Annex I of Directive 2001/42/EC, the Environmental Report identifies, describes and evaluates the significant impacts on the environment caused by the implementation of the Programme concerned, as well as reasonable alternatives in light of the objectives and territory covered by the plan or programme. In addition, all this is essential for ensuring a correct consultation process and participation from the public in respect of the drawing up of the said Programme.

To examine the internal environmental coherence among the various objectives of the Programme in question, the structure of the programme needs to be broken down and it is also advisable to verify whether it remains consequential in the programming process in the face of interventions and actions to fulfil. In particular, it has been evident that there existed similarities among the specific objectives of the Programme, as well as a good correlation between the criteria identified in the SWOT analysis and the relative programmed actions.

On the other hand, in order to evaluate the external environmental coherence of the Programme concerned, coherence and complementarity have been confirmed between the specific objectives of the Programme and the objectives concerning environmental sustainability which derive from the main action strategies of other international, Community, national (Italy and Malta) and regional programmes and norms.

In relation with such a reference outline, it is possible to declare that the objectives and the possible lines of action expected within the context of the Programme under examination are coherent with the environmental themes treated by the main programming and regulatory instruments currently in force; even at the level of sectoral planning it confirms a good compatibility with the relevant operational objectives. Such actions can impinge in a direct manner (adoption of best practices and innovative solutions of governance and territorial management, adjustment actions on the distribution networks and the realization of interventions intended to bring about energy savings and efficiency etc) as well as in an indirect manner (studies, research and demonstrative and awareness actions).

In any case, one can note that the intervention typologies present additional margins of definition sufficiently broad and in the particular interventions much will depend on the way the execution phase is realized.

The Environmental Report gives a description of the present state of the environment and its probable evolution without the implementation of the Programme under review. This analysis takes into consideration: the main environmental factors and components, that is, the themes listed in Annex 1 of the Directive 2001/42/EC; the environmental characteristics of the areas which can be significantly affected by the implementation of the Programme; and, the potential environmental problems in the Programme with particular reference to those relative to areas of particular environmental importance: protected areas and Natura 2000 network (in accordance with the Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC); vulnerable zones due to nitrates (Directive 91/676/EC); areas with hydro-geological and/or landscape ties; areas of high environmental crisis risk.

The framework of the environmental and territorial context of the area takes into consideration a series of environmental dimensions which have been identified with the help of the Core Set of Indications (CSI) as defined by the European Environmental Agency (EEA).

The set of indicators monitored by the Regional Agency for the Protection of the Environment (*ARPA - Sicilia*) has been used for the Sicilian Provinces, while the following documents have been used for Malta: “State of the Environment – Report 2005” drafted by the Malta Environment & Planning Authority (MEPA) and “Environment Statistics 2006” of the National Statistics Office of Malta.

In short, from the context analysis of the areas interested by the programme some critical environmental concerns emerge, that may affect the current state of the environment and its probable evolution in case the Programme is not finalized. These criteria are in line with what has already been defined in the SWOT analysis.

Amongst the information included in the Environmental Report, one can find a description concerning the qualitative evaluation process addressing potential significant impacts on the environment resulting from the actions envisaged by the Programme. Overall, the positive effects of the Programme on the environment prevail.

Furthermore, the Environmental Report also includes environmental selection criteria which need to be taken into consideration during the project selection phase and the preparation of the various calls for expressions of interest. When considering the experience of the previous programming, the continued financial support and the programme framework, at Community, National (Framework Programmes and National Operational Programmes) and Regional level (Regional Operational Programmes) for the period 2007-2013, that foresees clearly defined orientations and certain novelties with respect to the preceding period, the possibility of identifying 'alternative' possibilities is somewhat limited.

Therefore there seems to be only one possible scenario, the implementation of the new Programme of cross-border cooperation Italy-Malta 2007-2013, within which the actions can be totally flexible and complementary to the strategic framework for the new programming period 2007-2013.

For the purpose of completing the sharing of the SEA process between Sicily and Malta, the Managing Authority convened a meeting at which were present bodies with specific environmental competences and the General Public, with the aim of setting in motion and finalizing the consultation phase of the Programme and the Environmental Report, in terms of the requirements of Article 6 of the Directive 2001/42/CE.

In Sicily, the Managing Authority convened a consultation meeting on the 05.06.2008 at which were present those bodies with specific environmental competences, the General Public as well as environmental associations representing *ITALIA NOSTRA*, *L.I.P.U.*, *LEGAMBIENTE* and *W.W.F.* Copies of the Programme (in draft), the Environmental Report, the non-technical Synthesis and the Public Consultation Questionnaire were sent together with the invitation of attendance for the said meeting. Besides, an appropriate notice regarding the formalities governing the conduct of the public consultation process was published in the Official Gazette of the Sicilian Region (*Gazzetta Ufficiale della Regione Siciliana*).

The Republic of Malta, through the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division in the Office of the Prime Minister, in its role as the Maltese National Coordination Authority, took steps to publish on the PPCD institutional website, the official documents, translated in the English language, relative to the OP Italy-Malta 2007-2013, the SEA and the Public Consultation Questionnaire. Besides, an appropriate notice regarding the formalities governing the conduct of the public consultation process was published in the Government Gazette.

The documentation was made available, in both the Italian and English versions, on the internet website of the *Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy-Malta 2004-2006* (<http://www.interreg-italiamalta.org>), the internet website of the Planning and Priorities Coordination Division in the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta (http://www.ppcd.gov.mt/italia_malta) and the internet website of the *Autorità Ambientale Regionale* (<http://www.artasicilia.it>).

Furthermore, in order to facilitate the participation of interested parties, a specific questionnaire was made available on the above-mentioned sites.

At the end of the public consultation phase, launched on 23.05.2008 and finalized on 29.07.2008, no requests for any modification and/or insertions to either the Programme or the Environmental Report were received.

Likewise, no observations worthy of note regarding the Programme were forthcoming.

After the approval of the Operational Programme, the latter's environmental effects will be verified with the aim of eventually identifying predictable and unexpected effects. This process should provide indicators supporting the definition and adoption of appropriate measures and the eventual reformulation of the Programme's envisaged content and actions. Lastly, verification will be sought with respect to the level of objectives reached, in terms of sustainable environment, which have been identified in the present Environmental report.

Besides, in view of the integration of the SEA in the programming process, the monitoring of the environmental effects may be harmonized with the whole monitoring system of the Programme in question (article 10, par. 2), so as to avoid duplication of the monitoring activity.

In winding up the procedure for SEA, the Managing Authority declares that, in terms of Article 9 of the Directive, it has considered the environmental indications contained in the Environmental Report for the purposes of compilation of the final version of the Programme, especially insofar as it relates to the definition of the strategy and specific objectives.