



AI in Programme management:

the experience of the Interreg Italy-
Croatia Programme

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How we started

➤ Programme process revision

Linked to ongoing **system audit** (Description of the Management and Control System revision), need for more **simplification** and **efficacy**

➤ Request to test use of AI in our processes

Coming from our organisation (Veneto Region) and in line with EU and National guidelines for introducing AI in Public Administrations



The needs

1

1. Using advanced tools to make **project selection** more efficient and reduce the length of the process

2

1. Organise data and know-how related to **project monitoring** to allow informed programming decisions (financial progress, contracting, modifications, closure, outputs and deliverables, payments and irregularities, etc.)

The solutions

1

Dedicated tool (called «Klens»)

1. test AI to
automate checks
and provide support
during the
assessment process
(eligibility and
quality)

2

Off-the-shelf AI

test Google Gemini
tools to link
different datasets
and allow requests
at project level

Comparing solutions

«Klens» tool

Off-the-shelf AI

(e.g. ChatGPT, Gemini, Co-pilot)

Reliability of
outcomes

Closed system that only takes
information from the given
dataset

Potentially open system that
could take inputs from other
sources

Customisation

Tailored-made tool, training
quite fast as it was instructed
with previous IT-HR projects
and checklists with support
from external company

General tool, intensive AI
training carried out by MA
staff

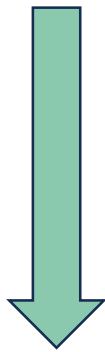
Updates

Automatically done

Manually done

«Klens» tailored solution

➤ Project development

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1. **Proof of Concept** (PoC) in July 2025 with Small-scale projects (56 proposals) – first tests on the eligibility checklist of the Programme
 2. **Interoperability with Jems** (via API) in September 2025 to carry out eligibility check on Standard projects (173 proposals) – further tests on eligibility checklist of the Programme
 3. Tests on the support to **quality assessment** (AI «pre-digested» contents taken from Application Forms to ease the work of assessors)

Klens Eligibility checklist

Esporta Excel

	Confidence	Lock
[a1] The proposal is the only submitted for the given project? Check: passed. Reason: No similar project acronym was found.	1	[1]
[a2] The proposal is complete and filled out in all its parts in English language? Check: passed Reason: All required paragraphs ('A.1 Project identification', 'A.2 Project summary', 'B Project partners', 'C.2 Project relevance and context', 'C.3 Project partnership', 'C.4 Project work plan', 'C.5 Project results', 'C.7 Project time plan', 'C.8 Long-terms plan') are present and filled with relevant content.	1	
[a3] The proposal is duly signed by LP's legal Check: passed. Reason: All		

Klens Report for quality assessment

Question

What added value does the cooperation bring?

- The importance of cooperation beyond borders for the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated
- The results cannot (or only to some extent) be achieved without cooperation
- Effective CB activities (and investment if any) are clearly demonstrated (no mirroring).
- Benefit for all PPs and for both side of the border are clearly demonstrated

Search strategy

A summary based on sections C.2.3, C.3, and C.4 of the application form.

Confidence

HIGH

Answer

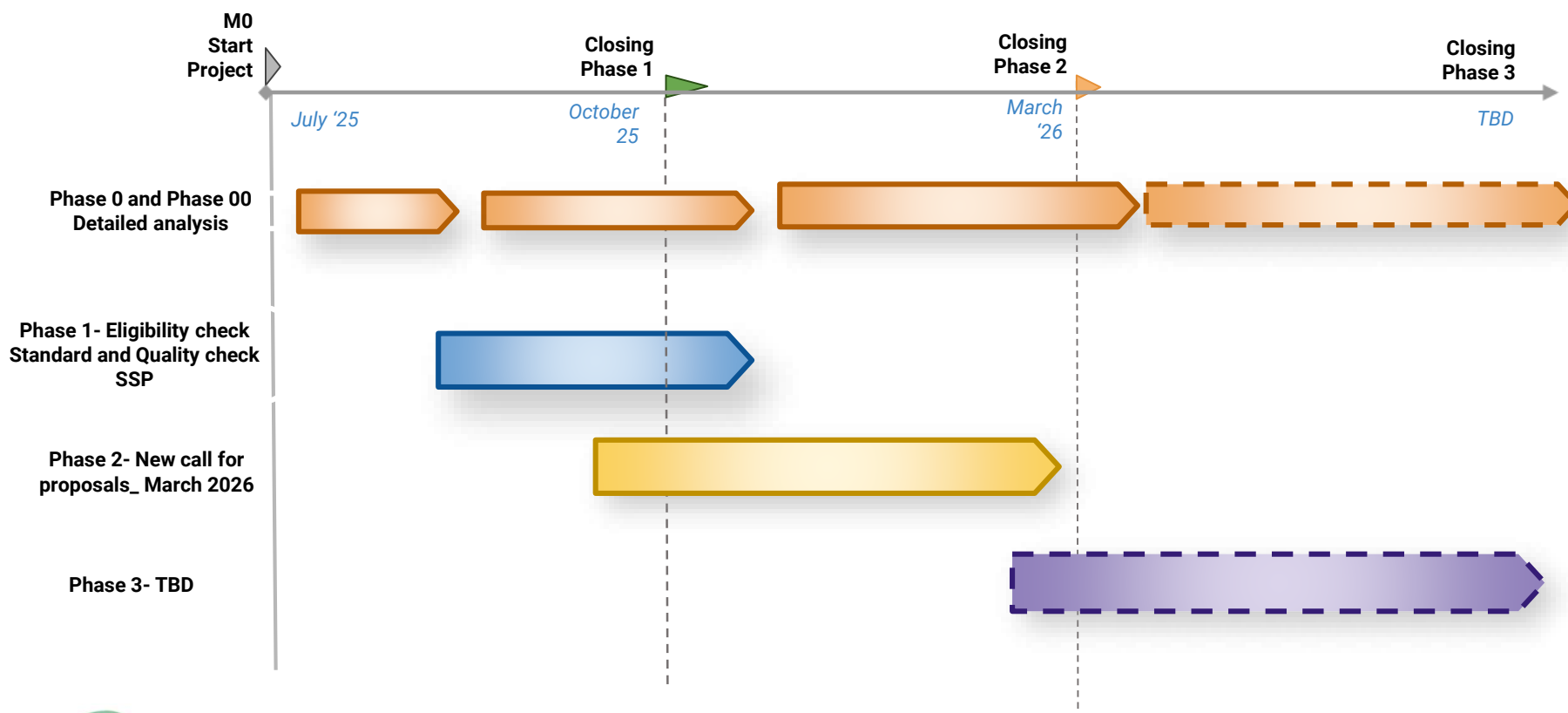
The project's cross-border cooperation is centered on the transnational nature of pilgrimage routes spanning Italy and Croatia. The partnership comprises four organizations: the Town of Vodice (Lead Partner, Croatia), FestAmbienteSud (Italy), SOCOBA Foundation (Italy), and EMEDEA (Croatia). Each partner contributes specific expertise in areas such as EU project management, cultural heritage, route management, and community capacity building. The project's work plan is designed to innovate spiritual tourism through co-creation, storytelling, and sustainable mobility. Key activities include participatory workshops ("Camino Dialogues") to create a "Camino Treasure List," Youth Media Camps for a digital storytelling campaign, capacity building for local tourism stakeholders, immersive cross-border experiences leading to a "Youth Camino Charter," and the creation of a permanent "Camino Adriatico Hub." This collaborative approach enables the development of joint digital solutions and a shared strategic vision to promote lesser-known routes as an alternative to mass tourism.

Explanation

The answer synthesizes information from the three specified sections. Section C.2.3 explains the value of cross-border cooperation for the project's topic. Section C.3 details the composition and complementary expertise of the partnership. Section C.4 outlines the project's work plan, including its objectives and key activities which are inherently collaborative and cross-border. The summary combines these elements to provide a comprehensive overview of the project's cooperative structure and implementation plan. The confidence is high as all specified sections were available and contained direct, non-conflicting information that was synthesized to form the answer.

Italy – Croatia

Klens roadmap



Klens expected benefits



Time reduction

Less duplication and fewer manual tasks in project selection, leading to faster processes and shorter timelines



Quality & Consistency

Better data quality and uniformity thanks to automatic synchronization across systems



In-depth Analysis

Opportunity to explore project themes in greater depth, supporting richer insights and decisions



AI Challenges



Testing phase

If eligibility is carried out according to a tight schedule it could be perceived as a waste of time by involved staff



Change management

AI introduction in our organization, like every innovation especially in the digital domain, entails the need to work on/ with the people and on the changes to be carried out



Assessor's role

It is currently difficult to imagine that the whole eligibility process could be carried out only by AI. At the moment we are having in parallel AI and assessors' results



Off-the shelf AI

Time-consuming, few results, not fully reliable outcomes



AI future developments (open questions)



Revising our processes

Given the results it might be promising to modify our checklists to include as many checks as possible that can be dealt by AI in view of our last CAP call for proposals in 2026. AI can be useful to highlight the areas where the assessor should concentrate the checks



More prone to complaints?

Using AI for eligibility could expose us to more complaints by potential beneficiaries?



Forward looking?

To what extent working now with AI in view of the next programming makes sense considering the speed of AI development and improvements?





Italy – Croatia

Veneto Region

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