

**OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME**

**“REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS” 2012-2013**

*Summary of the draft working document of May 2010*

The overall objective of the RCOP is the **achievement of higher competitiveness and a balanced regional development** by improving the conditions for innovations, encouraging research and technological development and improving electronic services, while supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and combined with improvement of overall social and economic conditions in Croatian regions. It is designed taking into consideration the challenges from operating in the European single market and the opportunities which are identified for the prosperity of Croatian enterprises.

The Programme is structured around the following axes:

**Priority Axis 1: Enhancing the Competitiveness of the Croatian Economy**

**Priority Axis 2: Increasing the Development Potential of the Croatian Regions**

**Priority Axis 3: Technical Assistance**

The strategy refers to increasing the competitiveness through support to SME, creation of favourable business climate, research and development, business and tourism related infrastructure, e-communications, education, health and employment respecting the principle of balanced regional development. It thus covers sectors under the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

The management of the RCOP will be ensured by the **Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship**, as the future *Managing Authority of the Operational Programme*.

In line with the Regulations of the European Union, the RCOP Managing Authority will delegate the implementation of designated priority axes/key areas of operations to the following *Intermediate Bodies*:

Intermediate Body	RCOP operations
Croatian Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises (HAMAG)	Operations in the sector of SMEs support
Business Innovation Centre of Croatia (BICRO)	Operations in the sector of R & D support
Agency for Regional Development (ARD)	Operations in the sector of regional infrastructure support

### Specific objectives

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The Priority axis 1 aims at reinforcing the Croatian SMEs and their ability to compete in international markets for increasing national competitiveness and faster economic growth.

The **objectives** of Priority axis 1 are:

- to improve the business environment and increasing SME competitiveness;
- to improve conditions for technology transfer and to support activities of the knowledge-based economy;
- to create better conditions for accessing non-grant financial instruments, such as microloans and guarantees;
- to create better conditions for increasing the overall competitiveness through direct support of SMEs (concentrated mainly on technological investment) and those with growth innovative solutions;
- to promote entrepreneurship and business start-ups, especially in the context of a knowledge-based economy and innovation driven sectors;
- to improve conditions for business support structures providing assistance to SMEs – business clusters.

### Operational Objectives

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**1.1: Improving the business environment and increasing SME competitiveness**

- Promotional activities, support to quality improvement and reinforcement of cooperation;
- Direct support of productive investments for SMEs.

**1.2: Technology transfer and support for knowledge-based economy (development or improvement of new technology, processes, new innovative goods or services)**

- Research and Development infrastructure;
- Improvement of conditions for innovation.

### Potential Beneficiaries

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- Public authorities at the central level (ministries and agencies)
- Regional/local self-government units, regional/local public institutions or associations and companies owned by regional a/local self-government units
- Private businesses entities (both legal and individual entity) which meet criteria for SMEs, conducting business in eligible sectors and registered in Croatia
- Research and Technology institutes, universities and higher education institutions
- Other business support organisations and institutions representing business community, industries, professional associations, Chamber of Commerce, etc.

### Specific objectives

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The **general objective** of this Priority axis is increasing the attractiveness of Croatian regions for entrepreneurs and workers, for inhabitants and for visitors.

The Priority axis 2 is focused on setting up and development of business and public services infrastructure, in order to increase the regional attractiveness and stimulate the economic growth and job creation. Its **specific objectives** are:

- to develop favourable infrastructure conditions for businesses – new ones and existing SME to improve conditions for their performance and ability to successfully compete in the market;
- to optimise exploitation of high potential for tourism development and to increase its competitiveness;
- to strengthen the cultural potential of the regions and integrate it in economic and social life;
- to achieve higher coverage of population with internet access;
- to increase the level of services provided in the field of education;
- to improve emergency medical services and telemedicine in rural and remote areas;
- to improve the infrastructure conditions for employment services' performance;
- to increase absorption capacity of the Croatian regions for the design and implementation of EU co-financed investments.

### Operational objectives

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#### 2.1. Business and Tourism related public infrastructure

- Public business related Infrastructures, mainly for SMEs;
- Public tourism infrastructures.

#### 2.2. E-communication infrastructure

#### 2.3. Educational infrastructure

#### 2.4. Health Care infrastructure

#### 2.5. Employment infrastructure

### Potential Beneficiaries

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- State organisations
- Self-governing units at county and municipal level
- Regional/local public institutions or associations
- Public companies owned by regional/local self-government units
- Regional/local tourism boards and associations
- Higher education institutions (universities)

- Non-profit organisations from private sector such as NGOs, foundations, associations including professional associations, etc.

### Priority Axis 3 -Technical assistance

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#### Specific objective

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Provision of assistance for the management and implementation of the Operational Programme "Regional Competitiveness"

#### Operational objectives

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- 3.1. Support for the management of the OP
- 3.2. Strengthening the capacity of the MA, the IBs and the potential Beneficiaries
- 3.3. Elaboration of background studies and support to the preparation of the next programming period