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Chairperson  
SEA Focal Point

19<sup>th</sup> April 2022

**Subject: SEA Screening of the Interreg Next MED Programme 2021-2027**

ERA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the SEA screening report of the Interreg Next MED Programme 2021-2027, dated March 2022, which the Authority received by email on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2022.

The Interreg Next MED Programme brings together, in one document, various objectives and actions which are intended to contribute to the achievement of smart, sustainable, fair development for all across the Mediterranean basin by supporting balanced, long-lasting, far-reaching cooperation and multilevel governance. Malta is one of the fifteen countries participating in this Programme.

Most of the objectives and actions in the Programme are soft in nature and no large infrastructure is being proposed. It is noted that some of the proposed actions would result in environmental improvements. ERA notes the screening decision not to subject this Programme to an SEA given that it does not have significant direct effects on the environment. ERA considers that the potential impacts are likely to be indirect and will depend on the scope, location and nature of the projects which will eventually be submitted for funding. The most relevant actions are SO 1.3 (regarding SMEs); SO 2.1 (renewable energy); SO 2.5 (water management); and SO 2.6 (waste management).

In this regard, Malta's relevant plans/policies and project-level decisions should:

- (i) direct future development towards existing areas designated for development and other similarly committed sites, away from rural locations, natural sites, landscapes and protected areas; and
- (ii) avoid and effectively mitigate potentially significant adverse impacts onto the natural/rural environment (e.g. natural physical features, valleys and watercourses, etc.), including protected natural sites and their landscape;

in order to ensure that projects proposed for funding under this Programme do not result in significant environmental impacts.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. Kevin Mercieca  
Acting Chief Executive Officer  
Environment and Resources Authority

