

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY: SHAPING REGIONAL POLICY, DELIVERING EU FUNDS

HOTEL OLYMPIA SKY - VODICE, CROATIA

11-17 OCTOBER 2026

TARGET GROUP

This program is designed for senior public officials directly involved in EU integration and regional and territorial development processes coming from the Western Balkans and Moldova and Ukraine, specifically:

- Heads of Members of the Negotiation Group for Chapter 22 – Regional Policy & Coordination of Structural Instruments (where applicable), representatives of the Union or Association of Municipalities, officials from the Ministry of Regional Development or the Ministry of Finance, particularly those working in units responsible for EU funds programming, management, or coordination.
- Representatives of local Governments working in the project development and implementation units, especially those funded by the EU.

KEY TOPICS

Given the key role of local and regional authorities in implementing EU-funded projects, the programme places strong emphasis on practical, field-based learning. Through study visits and case studies of successful Croatian projects, participants will gain insights into regional development, integrated territorial planning, and the use of EU funds. Particular attention will be given to designing quality development programmes, aligning local priorities with EU policies, and applying participatory approaches. The programme also fosters networking and peer learning, encouraging future cooperation among participants working on regional and local development.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the activity is to gain knowledge about the latest approaches of EU policies in stimulating territorial development. In doing so, special emphasis is placed on the key public policies of the European Union and the experiences with their implementation in the member countries. At the same time, the program wants to enable the transfer of Croatian experiences using various EU instruments to encourage territorial development.

LEARNING METHODS

Participants will acquire knowledge and practical skills through a combination of expert lectures, interactive discussions, case studies, group work, and field visits. Throughout the programme, participants will work in small international groups to analyse territorial development challenges and develop practical solutions applicable to their own countries. Study visits to EU-funded projects, together with discussions with representatives of local authorities, development agencies, and project beneficiaries, will provide first-hand insights into project preparation, implementation, and long-term impact. This methodology combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience while fostering peer learning and the exchange of experiences among participants.

KEY EXPERTS

Jakša Puljiz, Director of the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO), former Deputy Minister, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Government of the Republic of Croatia (2012-2016)

Mladen Vojković, Former member of the working groups for the development of the national strategic documents, EU reform programmes of Croatia

Domagoj Račić, Expert for EU funds, former member of the negotiating team for Chapter 26 of Croatia

AGENDA

DAY 1: SUNDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2026

Arrival of the participants

Dinner at the hotel

DAY 2: MONDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2026

Introductory lectures on current development trends, geopolitical context, and EU policies

09:00-09:30	<i>Registration of participants, distribution of materials</i>
09:30-10:00	Welcome and Introductory Addresses; Presentation of the Programme and Introduction of the Participants - <i>Representative of ReSPA</i> - Dubravka Smolić Vlaić, <i>Head of Service for Knowledge Transfer, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
10:00-11:30	Understanding EU Cohesion Policy and Place-Based Development • Evolution of EU Cohesion Policy • Territorial disparities and cohesion objectives • Place-based development approach • Future challenges for EU regions <i>Speaker: Jakša Puljiz</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
11:30-11:45	<i>Coffee-break</i>
11:45-13:00	EU Cohesion Policy after 2027: New Priorities and Governance • Current Cohesion Policy priorities • Proposed Multiannual Financial Framework • Simplification and performance orientation • Role of national, regional and local authorities • Implications for candidate countries <i>Speaker: Jakša Puljiz</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
13:00-14:00	<i>Lunch at the hotel</i>
14:00-15:30	Regional Development in Practice • Croatian regional development framework • Good practice examples • Factors of successful local development • Introduction to the case study

	<i>Speakers: Jakša Puljiz, Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
15:30-17:00	Group Exercise 1: Understanding Local Development Context - Stakeholder mapping - SWOT analysis - Identifying development challenges - Territorial assets <i>Speakers: Jakša Puljiz, Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
16:00	<i>Coffee break (served during the group work)</i>
19:30	<i>Dinner at the hotel</i>

DAY 3: TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2026

Strategic Planning and Integrated Territorial Development

09:30-11:00	Strategic Planning for Regional and Local Development - Strategic Planning Process in the Context of EU - Process of adopting the Multiannual Financial Framework, including the role of the European Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament - Linking Development Strategies with EU Programs and EU Funds - Programming EU Funds <i>Speakers: Jakša Puljiz, Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
11:00-11:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:15-12:30	Lessons from strategic planning - how to design a quality development programme - Intervention logic - Results orientation - Indicators - Risk assessment - Sustainability <i>Speakers: Jakša Puljiz, Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
12:30-13:30	<i>Lunch at the hotel</i>
14:00-14:30	Multi-level Governance and Stakeholder Participation - Participatory planning - Cooperation between ministries and municipalities - Involving civil society - Public-private partnerships <i>Speakers: Jakša Puljiz, Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i>

	Venue: Hotel conference room
15:00-16:30	Group Exercise 2: defining development priorities and associated programme intervention logic of potential project ideas for the local community in respective countries <i>Speakers: Jakša Puljiz, Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> Venue: Hotel conference room
16:00	Coffee break (served during the group work)
19:30	Dinner at the hotel

DAY 4: WEDNESDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2026

Regional Development in Practice – Šibenik Case Study

09:00-10:30	Šibenik-Knin County - EU Funds as a Tool for Local Development • From Strategy to Implementation • Strategic planning • County development plan Development Agency of Šibenik-Knin County - Integrated territorial planning: Development scenarios and intervention logic • Implementation of territorial investments on islands under the Integrated Territorial Programme Venue: Šibenik-Knin County
10:30	Transfer to City of Šibenik – Walking distance
11:00-12:00	City of Šibenik – Urban Development and EU Investments • Green transition • Digital transition • Integrated urban development Venue: City Hall, City of Šibenik
12:30-13:30	Lunch in Šibenik
13:30	Transfer to Fortress Sveti Ivan - walking distance
14:00-15:00	Visit to Fortress Sveti Ivan • EU funding • Sustainable tourism • Economic impact • Governance model

	<i>Site visit to Fortress sv. Ivan and surroundings</i>
	<i>Venue: sv. Ivan Fortress</i>
16:00	<i>Transfer to Fortress Sveti Mihovil - walking distance</i>
16:30-17:30	Visit to Fortress Sveti Mihovil <i>Site presentation of Fortress Sveti Mihovil with Guided tour through the fortress sv. Mihovil</i> <i>Venue: sv. Mihovil Fortress</i>
19:30	<i>Dinner at the hotel</i>

DAY 5: THURSDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2026

Field Study: Integrated Territorial Development and EU-Funded Projects

9:30-10:30	Innovation, Smart Specialisation and Regional Development Integrated Territorial Planning: Identifying Development Opportunities <i>Speakers: Jakša Puljiz, Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> <i>Venue: Kuća Šare, Zlarin</i>
10:45-12:30	Croatian Coral Centre Zlarin – From Local Heritage to Sustainable Regional Development - Linking the project to regional and local development strategies - Stakeholder engagement and partnerships - Securing EU funding - Challenges encountered during implementation - Cultural heritage as a driver of development <i>Venue: Croatian Coral Centre Zlarin</i>
13:00	<i>Transfer to Prvić</i>
13:30-14:30	<i>Lunch</i>
15:00-16:30	Project Presentations: EU-Funded Local and Regional Development Initiatives - Using EU Funds to Support Sustainable Local Development - Cultural Heritage as a Driver of Local and Regional Development (Faust Vrančić Memorial Centre) - Investing in Connectivity, Accessibility and Territorial Resilience (Prvić Šepurine Port Development Project) - Integrated Territorial Development and Place-Based Approaches for Local Communities <i>Venue: Prvić</i>
19:30	<i>Dinner at the hotel</i>

DAY 6: FRIDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2026

EU and national financial instruments for local and regional development

09:30-10:30	Revitalisation of less developed EU regions: the case of Croatia <i>Speakers: Domagoj Račić, Jakša Puljiz</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
10:30-11:30	Group work on case study - Preparing High-Quality Project Concepts • Selecting priorities • Defining objectives • Intervention logic • Maturity of projects <i>Moderators: Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
11:30-11:45	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:45-13:00	Group work on case study- Preparing High-Quality Project Concepts • Working in smaller groups on the assignment <i>Moderators: Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
13:00-14:00	<i>Lunch at the hotel</i>
14:00-16:00	Group work on case study - Preparing High-Quality Project Concepts • Final presentation • Feedback • Reflection • Lessons learned <i>Moderators: Mladen Vojković, Domagoj Račić</i> <i>Venue: Hotel conference room</i>
16:00-16:30	<i>Closing ceremony, evaluation of the program and awarding of certificates to participants</i>

DAY 7: SATURDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2026

Breakfast at the hotel

Departure of the participants according to the scheduled transfer plans