

SLOVENIA

1. National Context and Maritime Sector Funding

1.1 Maritime Sector Context

Slovenia's maritime economy is a highly specialized sector, contributing approximately **0.7% of national GVA and 0.8% of employment**. The sector is anchored by the Port of Koper, the largest container port in the northern Adriatic, which handled 22 million tonnes of cargo in 2023. Port activities are the dominant economic driver, representing **47% of the GVA and 33% of the employment within the national blue economy**. Other vital sub-sectors include **coastal tourism** and marine living resources (aquaculture and fisheries), which have shown steady growth into 2026.

1.2 National R&D and Blue Economy Funding Framework

While Slovenia lacks a dedicated "maritime-only" national R&D program, support is provided through broad scientific and sectoral frameworks:

- **National Research Programme (ARRS)**: Managed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), it funds maritime-related topics such as marine biodiversity, coastal infrastructure, and transport safety within general research calls.
- **EMFAF (European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund) 2021–2027**: This is the primary sectoral instrument in Slovenia, supporting sustainable aquaculture, marine biodiversity protection, and the digitalization of port infrastructure.
- **Horizon Europe & SBEP**: Slovenia participates in flagship EU partnerships like the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP), which has a 2026 call focused on the digital transition of marine activities.

1.3 Tax Incentives and Financial Support Mechanisms

Slovenia utilizes horizontal fiscal measures applicable to the maritime sector:

- **R&D Tax Relief**: Companies can deduct up to 100% of eligible R&D expenses from their tax base.

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- **Green/Digital Transition Relief:** Effective from 2022 and extending through 2026, companies can claim relief of 40% for investments in digital transformation and environmentally friendly technologies.
- **Investment Tenders:** In early 2026, the Ministry of Infrastructure published tenders specifically for the construction and equipment of new berths to modernize maritime administration infrastructure.

2. Programs Supporting Innovation and SMEs

2.1 Blue Economy and Maritime Startup Support

Support for high-growth maritime startups is integrated into the national ecosystem:

- **P2 Grants (SPS):** The Slovene Enterprise Fund (SPS) offers €72,000 grants for early-stage startups, with new calls expected in February 2026.
- **JR Startup Consortium 26-29:** A €3.2 million ERDF-funded call published in late 2025 provides mentoring, international market connections, and investor matchmaking for startups through 2029.

2.2 General Innovation Support Infrastructure

The general innovation support infrastructure includes:

- **EDIH DIGI-SI:** A key national Digital Innovation Hub that provides a "test before invest" environment, enabling maritime SMEs to pilot AI and robotics before full-scale adoption.
- **SPIRIT Slovenia:** Offers Innovation Vouchers and digital transformation grants that help maritime companies enter global value chains.
- **Technology Park Ljubljana (TPLJ):** Serves as an incubator and innovation intermediary, assisting blue tech companies in accessing EU-level financing.

3. Regional and Local Funding Opportunities

3.1 Regional Support in Coastal Regions

Regional development for the blue economy is concentrated in the Coast-Karst region:

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- **Regional Development Agencies:** Local authorities in coastal municipalities like Koper, Izola, and Piran manage Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) to support coastal resilience and sustainable urban mobility.
- **Slovenian Maritime Cluster:** Hosted by the University of Ljubljana, this cluster facilitates trilateral cooperation (Slovenia-Italy-Croatia) and aligns local projects with macro-regional strategies like EUSAIR.

3.2 Ports, Infrastructure and Cross-Border Cooperation

The major infrastructures and cooperation initiatives in the Slovenian blue economy sector include:

- **Luka Koper Green Port:** The Port of Koper utilizes mixed funding for its green transition, including the RENEWPORT project (Interreg Euro-MED) for solar energy installations, active through September 2026.
- **Interreg Italy–Slovenia:** Fosters cross-border SME collaboration in smart ports and eco-tourism.
- **BLUECRAB Project:** An active Interreg initiative in 2026 focused on monitoring Adriatic biodiversity through innovative technology.

4. Public–Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the Slovenian maritime sector are typically project-specific:

- **Port-Logistics Pilots:** Luka Koper frequently partners with private ICT firms to test smart logistics and decarbonization technologies.
- **Public Procurement of Innovation (PPI):** National authorities use PPI to encourage the private sector to develop custom solutions for maritime surveillance and environmental monitoring.

5. Private Funding and Investment

5.1 Private Investment Landscape

Slovenia lacks a dedicated maritime venture capital fund, but blue innovation is supported through:

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- **InvestEU & BlueInvest:** These platforms connect Slovenian maritime startups with pan-European equity investors and blended finance options.
- **Slovenian Technology Fund:** In 2025/2026, an additional €10 million was directed to Silicon Gardens Fund and Tivoli Partners to invest in high-growth tech startups.

5.2 Accelerators, Venture Capital and Crowdfunding

Slovenian private financing initiatives concern:

- **Accelerators:** The Razvojni Plus program by the Slovene Enterprise Fund provides mentorship and growth capital specifically for scaling innovative companies.
- **Crowdfunding:** The market is dynamic, with platforms like Ronin (equity) and Meta Yield (decentralized fundraising) available for maritime-tech projects.
- **Tokenized Maritime Crowdfunding:** Specialized training tools from the Blue Crowdfunding initiative (Interreg Euro-MED) help project promoters utilize blockchain-based tokenized investments for maritime assets.