

Interreg



Co-funded by
the European Union

IPA ADRION

**Interreg VI - B IPA Adriatic Ionian
Cooperation Programme 2021-2027**

**“IPA ADRION”
CCI2021TC16IPTN001**

**Application Manual first call for proposals
Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3**

Approved version: March 2023



European Union

European Regional Development Fund

List of acronyms

IPA ADRION	INTERREG VI-B IPA Adriatic Ionian Cooperation Programme
AF	Application Form
IP	INTERREG IPA ADRION Programme document
JEMS	Joint electronic monitoring system
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ESI FUNDS	European Investment and Structural Funds
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EUSAIR	European Union Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region
ERDF Participating Countries	Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia
ICT	information and communication technologies
IPA III	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPA Participating Countries	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia
JS	joint secretariat
MA	managing authority
MC	monitoring committee
NCP	national contact point
Participating countries	Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, San Marino
SME	Small and Medium size Enterprises
S.O.	specific objective
<i>Lead Partner (LP), Lead beneficiary and Lead applicant have been used as synonyms</i>	
<i>Project Partner (PP) and project beneficiary have been used as synonyms</i>	
<i>Associated Partner (AP) and Associated Organisation (AO) have been used as synonyms, also in JEMS.</i>	
<i>Operation and project have been used as synonyms</i>	

Disclaimer:

The present manual intends to provide useful information for applicants. It does not replace or overrule the official EU Regulations and IPA Adriatic Ionian Cooperation Programme.

Table of contents

GENERAL INFORMATION ON IPA ADRION PROGRAMME	5
<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>Legal and strategic framework</i>	6
<i>IPA ADRION Programme in a nutshell</i>	7
<i>Programme goal and strategy</i>	7
<i>Programme Priorities and specific objectives</i>	8
<i>Programme eligible area</i>	8
<i>Programme budget</i>	9
<i>The Programme intervention logic</i>	10
<i>What the Programme funds</i>	11
<i>Support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region</i>	11
<i>Horizontal principles</i>	12
<i>Synergies and complementarities with other programmes and initiatives</i>	13
<i>IPA ADRION programme governance and bodies</i>	14
<i>Programme language</i>	15
FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS DEVOTED TO PRIORITY AXES 1, 2 AND 3	16
<i>Opening of the call</i>	16
<i>Call thematic focus</i>	16
<i>Overall eligibility principles</i>	19
<i>Allocation of resources</i>	19
<i>EU Project financial size</i>	20
<i>Project Duration</i>	20
<i>Which organizations can apply</i>	20
<i>Project partnership</i>	21
<i>Assimilated partners</i>	23
<i>Associated partners</i>	23
<i>Partners from San Marino</i>	24
<i>Financing partners' main requirements</i>	24
<i>Partners' obligations</i>	25
<i>Co-operation criteria</i>	27
<i>Location of the operation and related activities</i>	28
<i>Co-financing funding method</i>	28
<i>Project budget</i>	28
<i>Use of Euro</i>	29
<i>Hierarchy of rules on eligibility of expenditure</i>	29
<i>General eligibility provisions</i>	29
<i>Eligible expenditure/budget lines</i>	31
<i>Project Intervention Logic</i>	40
<i>Project outputs and results</i>	42
<i>Durability of operations</i>	46
PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION AND SELECTION OF OPERATIONS	47
<i>Application Package</i>	47
<i>Application Form</i>	47
<i>Submission of applications</i>	55
<i>Assessment of received applications</i>	56
<i>Admissibility and eligibility check</i>	56
<i>Quality assessment</i>	56
<i>Anti-fraud check</i>	58
<i>Verification on absence of double funding</i>	58
<i>State Aid compliance check</i>	58
<i>Finalization of the project assessment grid</i>	59
<i>Decision making and communication to the Lead Applicants</i>	59
<i>Contractual provisions</i>	60
<i>Finalization of the assessment process</i>	61
<i>Project legal framework</i>	61

<i>Advance payment.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Payment procedure</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Publicity by the Programme</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Complaints procedure.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Conflict of Interest</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Monitoring of performance and midterm review</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Synergies with other programmes and EU initiatives</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Support to potential beneficiaries</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Annex 1 -Overview of IPA ADRION Priority Axes, Specific Objectives and indicative actions to be granted under the first call for proposals.</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Annex 2 - Overview on outputs and result indicators.....</i>	<i>79</i>
<i>Annex 3 - Admissibility and eligibility checks</i>	<i>86</i>
<i>Annex 4 - Quality assessment grid</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Annex 5 - State Aid discipline in IPA ADRION</i>	<i>95</i>

GENERAL INFORMATION ON IPA ADRION PROGRAMME

Introduction

The present Manual intends to give guidance to the potential beneficiaries interested in submitting project applications in the framework of the first call for proposals of the IPA ADRION Programme.

It does not replace the legal framework upon which the Programme has been drafted: applicants are warmly advised to carefully read the programming document and the other legal documents mentioned in the following pages.

Further guidelines and information on the submission of the project applications will be available on the Programme web site www.adrioninterreg.eu

Legal and strategic framework

An overview on the legal framework supporting the Interreg VI-B Adriatic-Ionian programme (IPA ADRION) is provided (non-exhaustive list); eventual amendments and implementing/delegate acts of the listed Regulations must be considered as well:

EU key regulations

- Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012;
- Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021, laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund, and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy, and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013, hereinafter referred to as CPR Regulation;
- Regulation (EU) No 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1301/2013, hereinafter referred to as ERDF Regulation;
- Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1299/2013, hereinafter referred to as Interreg Regulation;
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR);
- Regulation (EU) No 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021, establishing the instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III), hereinafter referred to as IPA III Regulation;
- Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid, Regulation (EU) 2021/1237 of 23 July 2021 amending Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty; Delegated and Implementing acts, as well as all applicable decisions and rulings in the field of state aid;
- Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088;
- Directives and rules on public procurement;
- Delegated and Implementing acts as well as all applicable decisions;

Programme documents

- The INTERREG VI-B IPA Adriatic Ionian Cooperation Programme, approved by the European Commission (EC) on 30 November 2022 (Decision number C(2022)8953);

- The Interreg IPA ADRION Environmental Screening Report;
- Financing agreements, signed between the IPA participating countries, the European Commission and the country hosting the IPA ADRION Managing Authority (MA).

Granted partners shall also be subject to:

- The laws of the Republic of Italy applicable to this contractual relationship to the contractual relationship between the MA and the LP;
- National rules applicable to the lead and project partners (PPs) and their activities;
- All other EU legislation and the underlying principles applicable to the LP and the PPs, including the legislation laying down provisions on competition and entry into the markets, the protection of the environment, and equal opportunities between men and women;
- Project data, comprising but not limited to latest project documentation such as Application Form and all project information available in the electronic system.

The application package of the first call for proposals available on the programme web site.

All manuals, guidelines and any other documents relevant for project implementation (e.g., application manual, implementation manual) in their latest version, as published on the programme website or handed over to the LP directly during the project implementation.

Key documents on the EU strategy of the Adriatic and Ionian region

- Endorsement of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), European Council, Brussels, 23-24 October 2014;
- Council conclusions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies – 2 December 2020;
- Addendum to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region COM(2020) 132 final – 2 April 2020 - related to the inclusion of North Macedonia as the ninth EUSAIR participating country;
- Addendum to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, COM(2022) 44 final – 14 February 2022 - related to the inclusion of San Marino as the tenth EUSAIR participating country.

IPA ADRION Programme in a nutshell

Programme goal and strategy

The IPA ADRION programme intends to contribute to establish the framework conditions to strengthen cooperation and establish good relations among partner countries, thus injecting dynamism in the enlargement process, reducing disparities and improving social cohesion, as well as supporting the implementation of the EUSAIR Strategy.

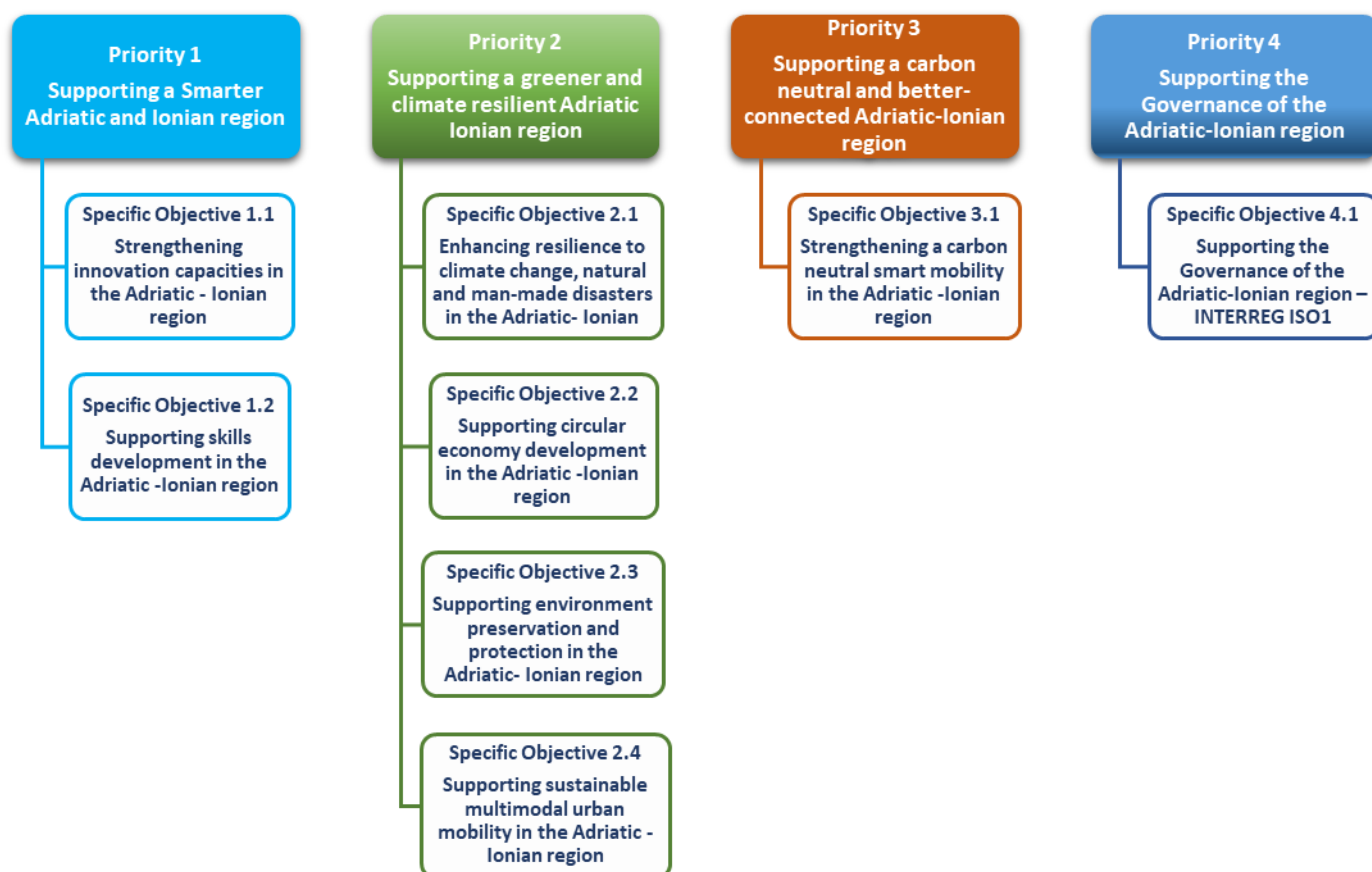
The programme aims addressing the shared Adriatic-Ionian region challenges like biodiversity safeguard, climatic changes, sustainable transport, through the implementation of innovative models and tools, acting

as a pivotal instrument for the identification of common solutions. This will contribute towards a smarter and greener Adriatic-Ionian region able to withstand future economic shocks.

Programme Priorities and specific objectives

The definition of the 2021-2027 IPA ADRION programme is based on outputs and results of the previous programming period and on its updated territorial analysis.

The programme is structured around four funding priorities that are further disentangled into eight programme specific objectives (SOs).



Programme eligible area

The IPA ADRION programme covers the perimeter of the EU strategy of the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and embraces a unique mix of EU and non -EU countries, along with one third country.

The programme eligible area involves 10 countries, out of which 4 EU Member States - Croatia; Greece; Italy and Slovenia – (hereinafter ERDF participating countries), 5 non-EU Partner States - Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Montenegro; North Macedonia and Serbia – (hereinafter IPA participating countries); and one third country (San Marino).

ERDF participating countries:

- Croatia (NUTS regions: Panonska Hrvatska; Jadranska Hrvatska; Grad Zagreb; Sjeverna Hrvatska);

- Greece (NUTS regions: Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki; Kentriki Makedonia; Dytiki Makedonia; Thessalia; Ipeiros; Ionia Nisia; Dytiki Ellada; Sterea Ellada; Peloponnisos; Attiki; Voreio Aigaio; Notio Aigaio; Kriti);
- Italy (NUTS regions: Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lombardia, Marche, Molise, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Puglia, Sicilia, Umbria, Veneto);
- Slovenia: (NUTS regions: Vzhodna Slovenija; Zahodna Slovenija).

IPA participating countries:

- Albania;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- North Macedonia;
- Montenegro;
- Serbia.

Third Country:

- San Marino



Programme budget

The overall programme budget amounts to EUR 160.810.020,00, out of which EUR 136.688.515 from EU public resources (Interreg Funds).

The programme financial resources are allocated to the four programme priorities according to the following table:

	Interreg Funds	National counterpart	Total funding
Priority Axis 1	39.639.670,00	6.995.236,00	46.634.906,00
Priority Axis 2	73.811.797,00	13.025.612,00	86.837.409,00
Priority Axis 3	12.301.967,00	2.170.936,00	14.472.903,00
Priority Axis 4	10.935.081,00	1.929.721,00	12.864.802,00
GRAND TOTAL	136.688.515,00	24.121.505,00	160.810.020,00

The programme co-financing rate is up to 85% of the total eligible costs.

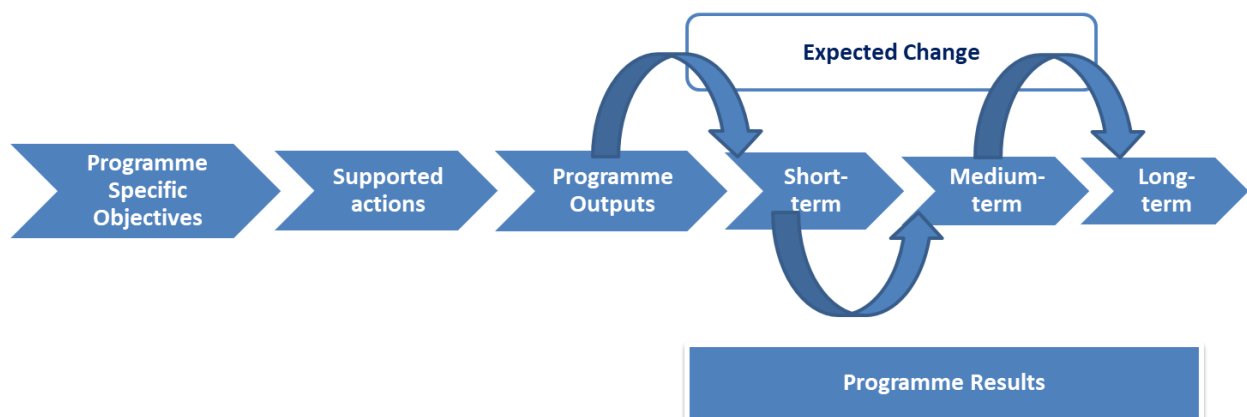
The Programme intervention logic

The IPA ADRION programme is based on a **result-oriented approach**, thus contributing to implement concrete progress within the programme area.

The result-oriented approach is based on:

- a) Result orientation of the programme;
- b) Programme monitoring through indicators;
- c) Definition of programme performance framework;
- d) Evaluation and reporting.

The programme intervention logic highlights territorial specificities, thematic topics, supporting actions and the expected outputs and results. The programme methodology therefore starts from territorial needs and challenges of the area, to identify the necessary interventions and the desired results, which should result in a measurable change in the programme indicators.



As a consequence of that, and in accordance with art. 17 of Interreg Regulation, the programme structure includes the identified policy objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives, and actions.

Each specific objective includes:

- Indicative actions and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to EUSAIR;
- Output indicators and result indicators with the corresponding milestones and targets;
- The main target groups.

What the Programme funds

Outputs indicators are used to measure the direct products created by the supported projects, which - in turn - contribute to achieving the expected results.

The IPA ADRION programme supports the delivery of **four main output categories**:

- **Policy instruments** (strategies and action plans);
- **Pilot actions and joint solutions**;
- **Training schemes**;
- **Cooperation frameworks/dimension**.

Outputs must be developed, adopted and/or implemented within the project lifetime.

The realization of these outputs must be attested by adequate supporting documents.

Specific details related to the output's delivery are provided in chapter **Project output and results** and Annex 2.

Through the envisaged programme outputs indicators, it will be possible to reach the following **results** and bring the expected **change** in the area:

- **Improved policy framework that is tailor-made** to the territorial challenges and needs of the area;
- **Enhanced policy learning** framework through inclusion and cohesion for the delivery of services targeting skills development, and the reduction of territorial and economic gaps;
- **Reduction** of legal and administrative **barriers**;
- Introduction of **innovative service solutions** for citizens and organizations;
- **Reduction of innovation gaps**, improved **technology transfer and uptake of new technologies**;
- **Increased knowledge and capacity** of the stakeholders of the area;
- **Enhanced awareness and transnational cooperation** among the actors of the key topics of interest;
- **Change of mindset** (new way of thinking, consuming and doing business);
- **Leverage effects** at cross-border and national/regional/local level.

Support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

The IPA ADRION Programme strategy is strictly linked with the EUSAIR. The EUSAIR is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in 2014¹.

¹ [Inforegio - EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/eu-foreign-affairs/en/infopage/infopage-adrion)

The EUSAIR objectives are:

- Supporting the integration of the Western Balkans;
- Providing political and financial support to foster good neighbourly relations in the region;
- Supporting regional cooperation, to boost economic development, improve connectivity, and enhance security;
- Promoting shared values and the unity in diversity of the rich cultural heritage of the macro-region;
- Supporting the development of sustainable tourism and its ecosystems in one of Europe's most popular destinations;

IPA ADRION programme primarily supports the implementation of the EUSAIR; its alignment is ensured by the embedding of EUSAIR "flagships" in the identified indicative actions of the selected Specific Objective. Additionally, through the Interreg Specific Objective ISO1, IPA ADRION programme shall support the EUSAIR governance and implementation².

Horizontal principles

Horizontal principles, in the context of EU funded work, are cross-cutting principles of core importance that are relevant to all the EU funded projects: equal opportunity and non-discrimination, equality between men and women and sustainable development.

1) Equal opportunity and non-discrimination

Projects financed by the IPA ADRION programme have to respect, in line with *Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union*³, i. a. the horizontal principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, (including based on national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation), during project design and implementation.

The PPs shall include the needs of persons with disabilities in the logic of the project intervention and consider the needs of these persons at each stage of the project implementation.

2) Equality between men and women

Granted projects shall ensure that equality between women and men, gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the project life cycle.

The applicants should indicate what type of actions will be carried out within the project to mitigate the identified barriers to equality.

3) Sustainable development

² Please also check:

<https://etc-eusair-network.eu/>, where the stakeholders' platform on the contribution to EUSAIR of the previous programming period is described.

<https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/about-eusair/>

<https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/2020/06/12/eusair-flagships-all-summed-up/>

EUSAIR Action Lab exercise link: [EUSAIR EMBEDDING PROCESS \(espcommunity.eu\)](https://eusair-embedding-process.espcommunity.eu)

³ [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12016001%2FEN%2FHTML)

Projects to be funded by the IPA ADRION programme shall be in line with the EU objective of promoting sustainable development, as well as all related EU and national regulations, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement⁴.

Projects shall follow an “environmental sustainability by design” approach, meaning that environmental or broader sustainability considerations including human health effects shall be integrated from the beginning into all activities. Partnerships are requested to identify and consider any potentially significant environmental and health issues during project design and to opt for implementing projects that do not adversely affect the quality of the environment; rather, the regeneration of the environment and ecosystem functions and services, climate neutrality as well as the sustainable management and enhancement of cultural landscapes should be prioritised.

A new approach in the 2021–2027 programming period is the “do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle, which is treated as a part of sustainable development principle and will be a subject of assessment. It prohibits of doing significant harm in the following six areas: climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, water resources, the circular economy, pollution prevention, biodiversity. An activity does significant harm when its harmful consequences are evident in at least one of the aforementioned six areas.

When assessing the existing circumstances, both the environmental impact of the activities itself and the environmental impact of the products and services provided by these activities throughout their life cycle shall be taken into account.

The SEA screening analysis has highlighted that IPA ADRION programme does not cause significant damage to the environment and is therefore in compliance with art. 9 of CPR and with art. 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852⁵. The programme does not expect, therefore, to cause any significant damage to the environment due to the nature of the envisaged actions: similarly, the proposed types of actions reported in the Programming document have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle and are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact.

However, each project proposal shall declare that it will not plan actions which can cause any serious damage to the environment. The Lead Partner shall provide, in its declaration, such a statement on behalf of the entire partnership. This statement and project content shall be assessed in relation to the DNSH principle (see Annex 6).

All granted projects by the IPA ADRION programme shall embed the horizontal principles along their design and implementation: how the horizontal principles are integrated in the proposed activities shall be subject to assessment, while during the project implementation the partnership has to report how they have been taken into account in the planned deliverables and implementation measures through the provision of evidence.

Synergies and complementarities with other programmes and initiatives

The IPA ADRION programme ensures synergies with several EC initiatives and programmes (e.g., Horizon Europe, LIFE; national and regional programmes supported by EU funds) as well as with other Interreg programmes (cross-border and transnational programmes operating in the same geographical area, Interreg Europe). Further information is provided in the IPA ADRION programming document.

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020R0852&from=EN>

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088

Project partnerships shall specify whether their proposal is linked to any other proposals granted under other programmes or under preparation.

During project development the granted partnerships should create synergies with the New European Bauhaus initiative, if applicable, and integrate its core values that are in line with the programme specific objectives in their proposals.

The European Green Deal is the EU's main new growth strategy to transition the EU economy to a sustainable economic model. It presents a transformational opportunity like no other in history: it is a commitment to remake Europe's economy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, bringing to a cleaner environment, more affordable energy, smarter transport, new jobs and an overall better quality of life. It supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement towards a more sustainable and fairer society.

The main elements of the European Green Deal are:

- Climate action;
- Clean energy;
- Sustainable industry;
- Buildings and renovations;
- Sustainable mobility;
- Eliminating pollution;
- Farm to Fork;
- Preserving biodiversity;
- Research and development;
- Preventing unfair competition from carbon leakage.

Practical contributions to the European Green Deal can be envisaged during project implementation through the adoption of “virtuous behaviours”, like:

- Use of video conferencing to reduce travelling;
- Publications on FSC certified paper;
- Use of “green public procurement” procedures and innovative public procurement where appropriate;
- Use of short supply chains in the implementation of projects activities;
- Raising awareness of partners, beneficiaries and target groups on sustainability issues;
- Promotion of activities with limited use of energy and natural resources.

IPA ADRION programme governance and bodies

Several programme bodies are in charge for the programme overall functioning. They perform functions related to the coordination, management, monitoring and control of the implementation of the programme.

The Managing Authority (MA) is represented by the Italian regional government of Emilia-Romagna Region and has the overall responsibility of managing and implementing the programme, including the

implementation of the programme's strategy and the planning of the calls for proposals. It ensures that the different programme bodies interact efficiently. It is assisted by the Joint Secretariat.

The Monitoring Committee (MC) consists of national representatives of the countries involved in the IPA ADRION programme. It is responsible, inter alia, for the approval of the calls for proposals as well as for the selection and approval of project proposals.

The Joint Secretariat (JS) is responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme i.e. assessment of project applications, monitoring of funded projects and internal and external communications. It provides expertise and assistance to the MA and the MC and represents the main contact point for the potential applicants together with the network of National Contact Points.

National Contact Points (NCPs) provide a link between the transnational and national level. Each participating country designates a Contact Point; they act as contact persons for project applicants and partners in their countries, promote the programme on the national territory, and support the Programme management in specific tasks linked to their mission.

National Controllers ensure the compliance of expenditure incurred by the project partners with national rules as well as programme rules and requirements. Each country participating in the IPA ADRION programme is responsible for verifications carried out on its territory.

The Audit Authority (AA) ensures that audits on the management and control systems are carried out, involving an appropriate sample of operations and annual accounts. The Audit Authority is assisted by a Group of Auditors (GoA) consisting of representatives from each IPA ADRION participating country.

Contact details of all programme bodies are available on the programme web site⁶.

Programme language

The official language of IPA ADRION programme is English. All deliveries, documents, tools, and communication activities of the programme management bodies will be in English; this language will also be used in all communication with the applicants and beneficiaries and among the project beneficiaries themselves.

Potential beneficiaries can receive information in their national language by the corresponding NCPs, who, if they deem it relevant, can also translate the programme documentation in their own language.

English version of documentation and correspondence is however the only binding one.

⁶ <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/index.php/about-program/programme/towards-the-new-adrion-a-view-ahead-on-the-next-programming-period-2021-2027/>

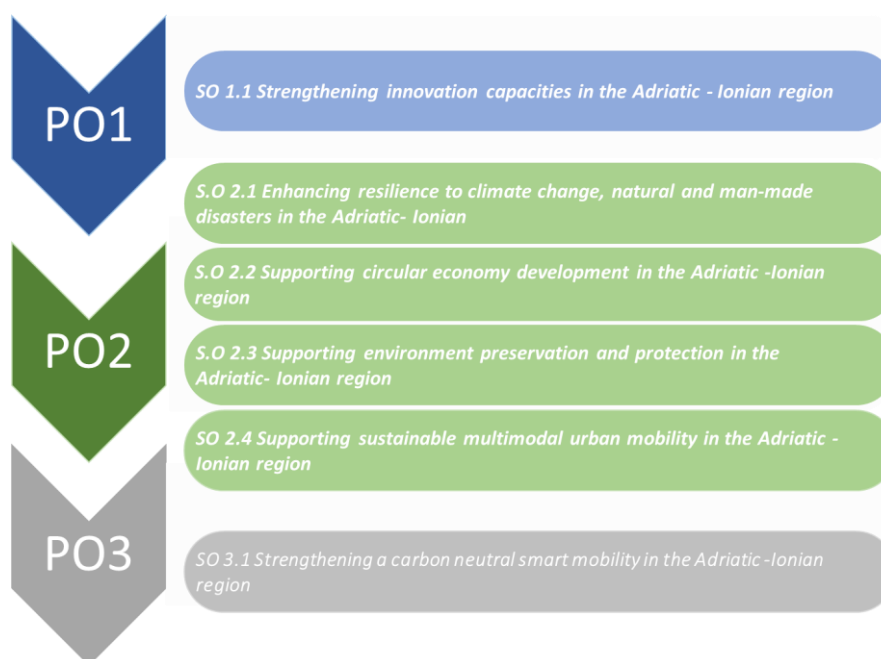
FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS DEVOTED TO PRIORITY AXES 1, 2 AND 3

Opening of the call

The opening of the first call for proposals is scheduled on 4th of April 2023, with the deadline for submitting applications by 30th of June 2023 at the latest by h. 13.00 (CEST/Rome time).

Call thematic focus

The first call for proposals will be addressed to the following priorities, specific objectives and indicative actions:



More specifically:

PRIORITY AXIS 1 – SUPPORTING A SMARTER ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

Specific Objective 1.1 - Strengthening innovation capacities in the Adriatic - Ionian region (ref. to SO 1.1 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

Develop transnational Smart Specialization Strategies in the main areas of specialization of the Adriatic Ionian area (especially in the following main sectors: energy, ICT systems and technologies, energy and sustainable environment, disaster prevention, smart mobility, innovative production technologies and advanced materials, blue economy).

Promote and set-up multi-level governance schemes to facilitate transnational cooperation models to address challenges in common areas of specialization.

Uptake, up-scale and test advanced technologies through pilot and joint actions, policies, tools and processes, particularly in, but not limited to, the main fields of interest of S3 (sectors as indicated in the first indicative action).

Promote and encourage the development of transnationally designed innovations (technical and non-technical innovation, including services) through pilot and joint actions contributing to face societal and environmental challenges like energy efficiency or climate change.
Promote the development of transnational partnerships, cluster-to-cluster cooperation, innovative networks, and similar initiatives.
Promote digital divide reduction by enhancing digital solutions in the private and public sector, and digital capacity building.
Support the development of transnational and macro-regional clusters in the emerging sectors as advanced packaging; biopharmaceuticals, blue economy industries, mobility tech, logistical services, environment industries, etc. (sectors as indicated in the first indicative action).
Promote actions and measures supporting SMEs development and modernization including intellectual property, technical and financial issues; testing solutions closer to the market (i.e.: proof of concept mechanisms, etc.), as well as the introduction of quality and sustainable requirements.

PRIORITY AXIS 2 – SUPPORTING A GREENER AND CLIMATE RESILIENT ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

Specific Objective 2.1 - Enhancing resilience to climate change, natural and man-made disasters in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.4 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

Develop and implement integrated joint transnational strategies and measures aimed at enhancing the resilience to climate change of coastal, river basins, rural and mountainous areas through a harmonised framework of standards and indicators and use of already existing research results and contributions to EU platforms (e.g.: EU Risk Data Hub, Climate-ADAPT).
Develop and implement transnational joint action plans to coordinate measures addressed to natural and man-made disaster prevention and standardized responses (e.g.: intense rainfalls, floods, landslides, heatwaves, heat islands, draughts, wildfires, oil spill, plastics at sea, river contamination etc.) by prioritizing nature based solutions instead of traditional grey infrastructures.
Collect compelling information and use it to develop advocacy material to strengthen synergies and increase preparedness among local/regional/national civil protection bodies on natural and man-made risks.
Implement pilot actions for a shared and coordinated use of big data for modelling, early forecasting and warning systems to reduce climate change risks.

Specific Objective 2.2 - Supporting circular economy development in the Adriatic-Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.6 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

Collect compelling information, implement exchange of experience, and test actions to develop advocacy material to increase knowledge and preparedness among policy makers and public administrators on the potentials of circular economy, and test actions/ experience exchange for practical implementation.
Identify and implement transnational action plans and strategies to enhance and/or scale up circular economy at regional/national/macro-regional level (e.g.: setting up transnational/networks for secondary raw materials, creating transnational marketplaces for recycling/up-recycling products).
Set in place joint actions and innovation networks to test science-based solutions aimed at collecting and recycling marine litter (e.g.: plastic litter, plastic fishing gear etc.).

Specific Objective 2.3 - Supporting environment preservation and protection in the Adriatic Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.7 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

Define and implement policy frameworks, strategies and related implementation to protect and enhance natural terrestrial and sea habitats, including protected areas and areas under Habitat and Birds Directives
Test solutions to protect and restore flora and fauna (with particular attention to algae/poseidonia oceanica, large carnivores, pollinating insects, migrators, fishes), also envisaging the use of blue and green infrastructure.
Identify and transfer good practices and innovative solutions addressing the presence of alien marine species and the preservation of native flora and fauna in terrestrial environments.
Define action plans to reinforce the implementation of existing/new Integrated Coastal Zone Management, Maritime Spatial Planning and the MSFD (EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive) as well as the implementation of the UN Barcelona Convention, in particular with regard to the management and monitoring of marine protected areas.
Define and implement legally binding agreements with key actors to reduce plastic discharge into the sea.
In the framework of Maritime Spatial Planning, develop and implement joint strategies on Adriatic and Ionian seas to safeguard biodiversity also taking into account the conflicting sea exploitation: tourism, commercial and recreational shipping, aquaculture plants, settlements of offshore wind parks, oil and gas extraction etc.

Specific Objective 2.4 - Supporting sustainable multimodal urban mobility in the Adriatic-Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.8 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

Elaborate joint actions to develop and implement intelligent transport system solutions devoted to a better infrastructure use and new mobility services to improve sustainable, clean and smart mobility systems and smart management of traffic flows for cities and functional urban areas.
Set in place joint actions aimed at promoting the active involvement of citizens, tourism actors and economic operators in the development of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) both in cities and in functional urban areas.
Support the shift towards sustainable and accessible urban public transport and active modes (e.g.: cycling, walking) through the implementation of joint pilot actions, by also taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the electro-mobility revolution.

PRIORITY AXIS 3 – SUPPORTING A CARBON NEUTRAL AND BETTER CONNECTED ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

Specific Objective 3.1 - Strengthening a carbon neutral smart mobility in the Adriatic-Ionian region (ref. to SO 3.2 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

Set in place transnational cooperation actions to develop and/or improve sustainable smart mobility systems to strengthen urban-rural linkages and implement innovative sustainable transport solutions, including forms of participatory governance to improve multimodal and low carbon mobility for passengers, tourists, and commuters of the Adriatic-Ionian region.
Support environmental performance and energy efficiency for low carbon port systems and related infrastructures – such as noise reduction, air quality, decrease of CO2 emissions - through the adoption of pilot actions testing innovative technologies, circular economy solutions, energy sustainability and harmonised regulatory standards for maritime/river transport.

Strengthen the role of the Adriatic-Ionian transport sector within the upcoming TEN-T policy through pilot actions and the implementation of shared solutions aimed at boosting the role of ICT, in particular with regard to the dematerialization of transport procedures, especially in maritime port areas.

Enhance the development of the Motorways of the Seas (MoS) concept as an alternative to overstretched land transport through targeted strategies and action plans, aimed at making full use of maritime transport resources as well as inland waterways in the logistics chain.

Support the increase of Short Sea Shipping (SSS) in the Adriatic-Ionian Sea basin as sustainable transport mode through joint developed actions, including the promotion of the use of alternative fuels/modes and last / first mile environmentally friendly solutions.

Projects to be funded in the framework of the call must address to one of the specific objectives only.

Reference to the selected indicative action(s) shall be provided in the summary section of the Application Form.

Indicative action(s) that will be not granted after evaluation phase, will be re-proposed in the next call(s).

Overall eligibility principles

Overall, the following requirements must be met by the proposed activities:

- They are for the benefit of the regions of the programme area;
- They are essential for the implementation of the project;
- They are explicitly foreseen in the Application Form or, if not, have been previously authorised by the MA/JS.

IPA ADRION shall not support activities falling under art. 7 of ERDF Regulation.

Allocation of resources

The overall amount of Interreg funds allocated to the first call for proposals will be of MEUR 65,70, disentangled per priority axes and specific objectives according to the following:

Priority Axis	Specific Objective	EU allocation - Interreg funds
PO1	SO1.1 - Strengthening innovation capacities in the Adriatic - Ionian region (ref. to SO 1.1 ERDF Regulation)	16.720.734
PO2	Specific Objective 2.1 - Enhancing resilience to climate change, natural and man-made disasters in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.4 ERDF Regulation)	14.010.826
	Specific Objective 2.2 - Supporting circular economy development in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.6 ERDF Regulation)	5.032.623

	Specific Objective 2.3 - Supporting environment preservation and protection in the Adriatic Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.7 ERDF Regulation)	14.493.952
	Specific Objective 2.4 - Supporting sustainable multimodal urban mobility in the Adriatic -Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.8 ERDF Regulation)	8.723.212
PO3	Specific Objective 3.1 - Strengthening a carbon neutral smart mobility in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 3.2 ERDF Regulation)	6.710.164
	TOTAL	65.691.511

The MC of the IPA ADRION programme reserves the right not to commit all available resources, depending on the quality of submitted applications.

EU Project financial size

Project EU budget may be up to EUR 1.500.000,00 Interreg funds.

IPA ADRION EU contribution will be limited to a co-financing rate up to 85% of eligible costs for all financing project partners. The share of expenditure (at least 15%) not covered by Interreg funds shall be ensured by national co-financing sources.

The proposed project budget must be built on the principle of sound financial management, i.e.: it must truly reflect the activities foreseen in the project.

Should the granted projects spend more than what approved by the MC, the EU contribution shall not be increased accordingly.

Project Duration

Project proposals expected to be granted under the first call for proposals shall not last more than 36 months.

Applicants shall indicate the start and end date in the Application Form, taking into account the necessary time for the assessment, selection and contracting procedures.

Approved operations will be offered, if this is the case, the possibility of modifying this starting date as reported in the Application Form before the signature of the subsidy contract.

Which organizations can apply

All organizations/institutions interested in being part of a project proposal must fulfil all the following criteria (with some exceptions reported in the following paragraphs):

- **Established under the national law of one of the participating countries to the programme.** Nationality will be determined on the basis of the organisation's statute/articles of incorporation which shall demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the internal law of a participating country to the programme. In this respect, any legal entity whose statute has been established under the national law of a country not participating to the programme cannot be

considered as an eligible partner, even if it has established branches/offices legally registered under the national law of a participating country to the programme;

- **Have their legal seat and their seat of operations in a participating country/part of a participating country included in the programme area** (with the exceptions reported under the sub-paragraph “Assimilated partners”);
- Be endowed with **legal personality**.

In addition to the above, eligible financing project partners shall either be, according to their legal status:

- Public authorities at **national, regional and local public bodies**, and associations formed by one or several of such public bodies;
- **European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)**⁷, provided that the members thereof involve partners from at least two participating countries (ref to art. 23.6 of Interreg Regulation); eligible EGTC must be governed by the law of one of the IPA ADRION participating countries where the EGTC has its registered office. An EGTC cannot be a sole partner of an IPA ADRION project proposal;
- **Bodies governed by public law, and associations constituted by one or several bodies governed by public law, as defined in Article 2(4) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement**⁸, i.e., bodies that have all of the following characteristics:
 - (a) They are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
 - (b) They have legal personality; and
 - (c) They are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law;
- **Private bodies**, including private companies, having legal personality;
- **International organisations** under the national law of one of the IPA ADRION participating countries.

Project partnership

Eligible project proposals must involve partners located in the programme geographical area.

To ensure fair involvement of IPA ADRION territory, and to further spread of projects outcomes, the minimum eligible partnership shall have the following characteristics:

- At least **6 project partners, out of which 3 from IPA and 3 from ERDF different participating countries**;
- The partnership can include up to a **maximum of 2 financing project partners from the same participating country**;

⁷ Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC).

Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings.

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32014L0024>

- The same organization cannot be **lead partner** in more than 2 project proposals in two different priority axes.
- The same organization cannot be involved in more than 3 project proposals per call.

As an exception, the following public institutions/private non-commercial entities can be considered as “per department”:

- **Ministries;**
- **Regional bodies (regions/counties/autonomous provinces);**
- **Universities/research institutions;**
- **Chambers of Commerce and Industry (with their sectoral associations/chambers/regional networks).**

“Department” is understood as an organisational unit with financial and administrative autonomy and having technical and administrative staff to ensure its functioning. Thus, each single department, within the above institutions, can be considered as a separate potential applicant.

It is recommended that eligible partnership does not involve more than 12 financing project partners.

Each to be constituted partnership shall consider that it is not the number of institutions listed in the proposal that makes the project partnership ideal, but rather their expertise to carry out the planned activities and deliver effective outputs and results, reaching out to their target groups.

The topics addressed by the project determine the profile of the organisations that could be involved in the project activities.

Potential project partners located in San Marino do not account for the partnership minimum requirements.

The potential beneficiaries will be identified on the basis of VAT or "other identification number" to be reported in the B section of the Application Form.

Correctness of data will be verified by the NCPs, who will be the responsible bodies for the identification of the partners and the consequent verification on the number of applications the same partner is involved in. Beneficiaries with a European Participant Identification Code (PIC) are requested to indicate it in the dedicated box. In case of project approval and financing, PIC will be requested to all beneficiaries⁹.

⁹ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/funding-tenders-opportunities/display/OM/Registration+and+validation+of+your+organisation>

If, for whatever reason, two or more project partners are declared ineligible, the entire project proposal will be declared ineligible.

In case an infringement of the requirements above is detected, the eligibility of the project partner – if compliant with all the other requirements - shall be determined by the time of arrival (i.e.: submission to the JEMS system) of the project proposal.

Lead Partner

According to art. 23.5 of Interreg Regulation “*where there are two or more partners, one of them shall be designed by all the partners as the Lead Partner*” (Lead Partner principle).

The following organizations located in ERDF and IPA participating countries shall be considered as eligible LPs:

- Public bodies, including their association;
- Bodies governed by public law and their associations, including EGTCs, governed by public law;
- International organizations ruled by national law;
- Assimilated partners (see the definition below).

Financing Project Partner

Project partners can be:

- Public bodies;
- Bodies governed by public law and their associations , including EGTC, governed by public law;
- International organization ruled by national law;
- Assimilated partners (see the definition below);
- Private bodies.

Assimilated partners

As an exception, and in order to overcome the geographical constraints applying to Italy, those Italian public authorities at national level which are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but located outside of it (e.g.: Ministries), are considered as *Assimilated partners*, with equal in rights and obligations of applicants located within the Programme geographical area.

The attribution of the characteristic of Assimilated Partner to an Italian institution located outside the Programme area shall be duly justified in the project application and further assessed with the support of the Italian NCP.

Associated partners

The IPA ADRION programme foresees the involvement of *Associated Partners*, i.e.: those bodies willing to be involved in a project with an observer or associated status without financially contributing to the project. The associated organizations do not account for the partnership minimum requirements; all expenditure incurred

by these bodies shall be finally borne by any of the organizations acting as financing partners in order to be considered as eligible. The associated organizations must not act as service providers in order not to enter in conflict with public procurement rules.

The Associated Partners must be located in the European Union or in the IPA countries of the IPA ADRION programme area; their participation must be strategic to the project, and described both in the relevant sections of the Application Form and in its expression of interest.

Expenditure incurred by the Associated Partners shall be limited to reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs related to their participation in project meetings.

Partners from San Marino

As far as partners from San Marino are concerned:

- They may be involved either as Project or Associated Partners;
- Their participation shall not count for the fulfilment of the minimum eligible partnership size requirement;
- They will not benefit from Interreg funds; their engagement shall be ensured by their own funds;
- They must ensure their contribution to the achievement of project outputs and results.

Financing partners' main requirements

Financing partners must ensure that:

- They have adequate human and technical resources to ensure a sound project implementation and management;
- Their administrative involvement in the project does not undermine their daily activities;
- Their financial commitment within the project is adequate to their size and capacity;
- They have the financial capacity of advancing payments for the implementation of project activities and eventual delays in reimbursement of EU contributions will not undermine their capacity of implementing the foreseen activities within the project.

As a general principle, as far as the role of **PPs within the project is concerned, organisations whose main scope of activities and role consists mainly of project coordination, management, communication or knowledge management, will not be positively assessed**. The involvement of such organisations in the project should be, instead, foreseen as external providers to be contracted following the applicable public procurement procedures.

Potential beneficiaries must state in their Declaration that they do not find themselves in any of the situations listed in art. 136 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046:

- Bankrupt, insolvency or winding-up procedures, their assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, they are in an arrangement with creditors, their business activities are suspended, or they are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under Union or national law;

- Breach of obligations related to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law and confirmed by a final judgement or a final administrative decision;
- Grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards to which the entity belongs; wrongful conduct denoting negligence or intent;
- Fraud and corruption confirmed by a final judgement or a final administrative decision;
- Criminal conduct;
- Significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the implementation of a legal commitment financed by the budget which has: i) led to the early termination of a legal commitment; ii) led to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties; or iii) been discovered by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors following checks, audits or investigations;
- Irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95 confirmed by a final judgement or a final administrative decision;
- Creation of an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business established by a final judgement or a final administrative decision.

Finally, in case the potential beneficiaries, in addition to the cases reported above¹⁰:

- have misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information;
- were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise;

shall be rejected from an award procedure.

Similarly, beneficiaries considered as undertaking in difficulty, as defined in point (18) of Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014¹¹, unless authorised under *de minimis* aid or temporary State aid rules established to address exceptional circumstances shall not be granted in accordance with art. 7 of ERDF Regulation.

Partners' obligations

Obligations of the LPs and PPs are laid down in the Subsidy Contract and in the Partnership Agreement respectively.

The Subsidy Contract determines the rights and responsibilities of the LP – according to the Lead Partner principle – with regard to the conditions for the project implementation, the requirements for reporting, financial controls, litigation etc.

The Partnership Agreement transfers rights and responsibilities from the LP to the PPs.

The templates of these two legal documents shall be provided on the programme web site.

¹⁰Ref. to art. 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046.

¹¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0651&from=EN>

Eligible partners shall be directly responsible for preparation and implementation of their share of project's activities within the partnership, not acting as an intermediary or sub-contractor.

Lead Partner's tasks

In accordance with art. 26 of Interreg Regulation, the LP shall:

- a) be responsible for the coordination of the drafting of the project application and of its submission on behalf of the entire partnership. In case clarifications are necessary during the assessment phase, the JS will address them to it;
- b) Sign the Subsidy Contract with the MA on behalf of the entire partnership;
- c) Ensure arrangements with the other PPs comprising provisions able to guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the project and arrangements for recovering the amounts unduly paid;
- d) Assume the responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the entire operation; in this respect it sets the coordination structure through the appointment of key figures (e.g.: a project coordinator, a financial coordinator and a communication manager) operating for the entire partnership;
- e) Ensure that expenditure presented by all PPs has been incurred in implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the beneficiaries, and is in accordance with the Subsidy Contract;
- f) Ensure that the expenditure presented by all PPs has been verified by the controllers appointed by the participating country where the partner is located according to the specificities of the national system;
- g) Ensure that the promised outputs as in the approved application are delivered in accordance with the set timeline;
- h) Receive the reimbursed amount from the IPA ADRION programme on behalf of the entire partnership and transfer the due amounts to its PPs as soon as possible without deducting any amount or specific charge and within the timeframe agreed by all partners and following the same procedure applied in respect of the LP. It shall also ensure that no amount shall be deducted or withheld and no specific charge or other charge with equivalent effect shall be levied that would reduce that amount for the other PPs;
- i) Guarantee the reimbursement of amounts unduly paid to the MA upon receiving a recovery order following the detection of an irregularity on behalf of the affected PPs(s) (itself or other PP(s));
- j) Ensure that all project documentation (e.g.: progress reports etc.) shall be kept available for a 5-year period from 31 December of the year in which the last payment by the MA to the beneficiary was made, without prejudice to the rules governing State Aid;
- k) Coordinate the communication flow towards the MA/JS with regard to the timely submission of the progress reports and requests for reimbursement;
- l) Be responsible of the communication flow between the partnership and the IPA ADRION programme (mainly with the JS and the MA); be in charge of spreading communication and information received by IPA ADRION programme to its PPs, including the announcements to participate to seminars organized by the programme;
- m) Ensure prompt solutions of management problems (e.g.: change of partners, requests for revision of activities etc.).

Project Partners' tasks

Each PP shall carry out the activities planned in the approved Application Form within the deadline agreed at Programme and partnership level.

Each PP shall:

- a) Sign the Partnership Agreement;
- b) Respect and implement project arrangements to ensure a sound project implementation and ensure that its expenditure has been verified by the/a controller appointed by its participating country;
- c) Assume responsibility towards the LP of repaying the received undue amount in case of irregularities in the declared expenditure;
- d) Ensure quality implementation of all the activities under its responsibility within the set timeline;
- e) Keep regular contacts with the LP and communicate its eventual difficulties emerging during the project implementation;
- f) Provide the LP with the relevant information, data and material to be included in the progress reports;
- g) Provide the LP all financial data necessary for drafting the request for reimbursement to be sent to the JS;
- h) Ensure that all project documentation (e.g.: progress reports etc.) shall be kept available for a 5-year period from 31 December of the year in which the last payment by the MA to the beneficiary was made, without prejudice to the rules governing State aid.

Co-operation criteria

Cooperation has to be at the heart of each project. In order to be eligible, projects must contribute to at least three out of the following four cooperation criteria:

Joint development (compulsory)

- All project partners shall contribute to the project idea generation; future activities to be implemented shall take profit from the know-how of each partner ("mirror" activities, i.e.: the same activities to be implemented by all partners at home reducing *de facto* cooperation should be avoided to the possible maximum extent).
- All project partners shall define how they intend to work together, including the distribution of tasks among them.
- Planned activities shall be coordinated by the lead partner.

Joint implementation (compulsory)

- Project activities must be implemented in a cooperative way; this includes the mutual respect of the overall project time plan, regular exchange of information and update among project partners, identification of joint solutions, insurance that planned deliverables and outputs are of good quality.
- Coordination role of the project ensured by the lead partner.

Joint financing (compulsory)

- As the project is characterised by one budget which is the sum of each project partner allocation, the project budget shall mirror the activities to be performed by each partner.
- Each partner shall support the lead partner in its administrative and financial coordination activity vis-à-vis the programme authorities, by providing timely and qualitative data and information for the elaboration of the project progress report.
- Administrative and financial obligations shall be ruled in the partnership agreement.

Joint staffing (optional)

- Project partners shall not duplicate functions within the partnership, in particular with regard to the project management functions that shall be appointed to the lead partner (i.e.: the project shall have only 1 project coordinator, 1 joint financial manager etc., who will keep regular contacts with the partners for the fulfilment of their tasks).

The presence of the first three dimensions of cooperation **is considered as a condition of eligibility of project proposals.**

Ways of cooperation and their actual shaping in the project proposal must also be mirrored in the work packages and assessed from a qualitative point of view.

Location of the operation and related activities

Activities granted by the IPA ADRION programme shall be implemented in the programme geographical area and for its benefit.

The same goes for the activities implemented by the Assimilated Italian Partners, with the exception of their management activity.

In duly justified cases, activities performed by PPs may be implemented outside the programme geographical area upon condition they are for its benefit (e.g.: meetings and events organized by European institutions in Brussels; participation to thematic events, fairs etc.).

These activities must be included in the Application Form, or if they occur during project implementation, they must be previously authorised by the MA/JS.

Co-financing funding method

The share of expenditure (at least 15%) not covered by EU Interreg funds shall be ensured by national co-financing source, i.e.:

- a) **Public funding:** public co-financing provided by central, regional or local public bodies, obtained either through specific-co-financing schemes established at participating countries level or on an *ad hoc* basis; public co-financing can also be the contribution directly provided by public or bodies governed by public law involved in the projects;
- b) **Own resources of International Organizations:** they may be considered as public co-financing, depending on the decision by the National Authorities of the participating countries where such organizations are located;
- c) **Private funding:** refers to the amount of own funds provided by private institutions through their involvement, or to the provision of funds from private sources external to the partnerships.

Each financing PP involved in a project proposal, regardless of its status, shall declare the nature of its co-financing in the Application Form.

Applicants can refer to their NCPs for an overview of the national co-financing systems.

Project budget

The system of financing is a budget-based grant. The grant is awarded through the reimbursement of costs considered as eligible by the programme and is calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget. Eligible PPs shall ensure stable and sufficient resources to ensure both project implementation and the continuity of the organisation activities throughout the lifespan of the project.

The budget of the project must be drafted following the real cost principle¹², fully accomplishing the principles of adequacy of costs and sound financial management.

The principle of sound financial management builds on the following three principles:

- The **principle of economy**: it requires that the resources used by the beneficiary in the pursuit of its activities shall be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality and at the best price;
- The **principle of efficiency**: it concerns the best relationship between resources employed, the activities undertaken and the achievement of objectives;
- The **principle of effectiveness**: it concerns the extent to which the objectives pursued are achieved through the activities undertaken.

Use of Euro

The budget must be drawn up in Euro. Applicants not based in the Euro zone are advised to draft their budget share using the exchange rate published on the Official Journal of the EU.

The exchange rate used for accounting expenditure might be different from the one used for the purpose of drafting the budget. Costs related to fluctuation of foreign exchange rate are not eligible.

Hierarchy of rules on eligibility of expenditure

Rules on eligibility of expenditure must obey the following hierarchy: EU Regulations apply, followed by IPA ADRION programme rules. Only in case there are no EU or programme provisions or they do not offer enough details, national, regional or local legislation and institutional rules can apply.

National rules cannot prejudice the rules established by EU regulations.

If national rules are stricter than EU or Programme ones, they must be applied.

The legal norms and documents reported in paragraph 2 of the present manual are those applicable both to ERDF and IPA partners¹³.

Whenever different sets of rules apply to ERDF and IPA beneficiaries, these are expressly indicated in the related paragraphs and sub-paragraphs.

General eligibility provisions

The following set of financial rules is applicable both to ERDF and IPA project partners.

¹² Except for preparation costs and when simplified cost options (flat rate, lump sums) are used for calculating costs.

¹³ All regulations are available in their latest version in the EUR-Lex database of European Union Law at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>.

Eligible expenditure

As a general rule, expenditure is eligible for funding if it fulfils all the following general eligibility requirements:

- It has incurred and paid within the eligible period related to the duration of the project as defined in the last version of the Application Form; exceptions refer to *preparation costs* and *project closure costs*:

Preparation costs have the form of a lump sum and refer to any costs incurred by the partnership (Lead Partner and/or Project Partners) of approved projects for the preparation of the Application Form for an amount of EUR 14.200 (EU and national contribution), on condition they have been included in the Application Form (AF). If a single beneficiary receives any public subsidy for project preparation or application (e.g., seed money) it shall be excluded from the lump sum for project preparation (i.e., lump sum to be shared among the other beneficiaries only). Any costs incurred by the projects between the date of submission of the AF and the date of signature of the subsidy contract (i.e.: between the end of the preparation period and the start of the implementation period) for fulfilling the conditions for improvement cannot be claimed as they are not considered part of the preparation costs. LP and/or PPs do not need to provide any justification or supporting documents for the preparation costs, which will be included and verified by first level controllers in the first Project/Partner Progress Report.

Project closure costs refer to the finalization of all the legal and administrative obligations related to the granted activities, including the preparation of the last progress report, the final report and the reconciliation with the initial granted amount, if necessary; these activities take place after the project official finalization of activities reported in the AF and are generally included in the last request for payment; with the exception of equipment expenditures, all cost categories are eligible for project closure.

- It refers to costs incurred and paid for the implementation of the project and in accordance with the AF approved by the MC or its eventual subsequent approved revisions;
- It is essential for the implementation of the project, and it would not be incurred if the project is not carried out;
- It relates to a product or service foreseen in the approved AF that has been delivered and complies with publicity and information requirements;
- It is directly borne by the beneficiary and supported by accounting documents justifying it (invoices, pay rolls...) except for costs calculated as flat rates and lump sums;
- It relates to an activity which has not benefitted from financial support by another public source (double funding);
- It complies with the principle of sound financial management (efficiency, effectiveness, and economy);
- It complies, if required, with the public procurement rules applicable in that participating country and/or with programme rules;
- It is registered in the beneficiary's accounts through a separate accounting system or through an adequate accounting code set in place specifically for the project;
- It is not in contradiction with specific programme rules;
- It is verified by an authorised national controller.

Non-eligible expenditure

The following costs are **not eligible**:

- Fines, financial penalties and expenditure on legal disputes and litigation;
- Costs of gifts;

- Costs related to fluctuation of foreign exchange rate;
- Charges for national financial transactions;
- In kind contributions (in the form of provision of works, goods, services, land and real estate for which no cash payment supported by invoices, or documents of equivalent probative value, has been made);
- Interest on debt;
- Purchase of land;
- Second hand equipment (unless falling under the conditions described in paragraph *Equipment costs*);
- Fees or sub-contracting between beneficiaries of a same project for services, equipment, infrastructure and works carried out within the project;
- Value added tax (VAT) if related to projects whose total cost is higher than EUR 5.000.000 including VAT, or if related to operations whose total cost is at least EUR 5.000.000 where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;
- Project expenditure split among PPs (i.e. sharing of “common costs”).

The IPA ADRION programme also considers as **not eligible** the following expenditure:

- Under the travel and accommodation budget line, the cost of taxi is not reimbursed, unless it is the only or the most convenient transport mean (or in other duly justified cases, e.g., for the transport of heavy material);
- The costs for the creation of a project web site: unless otherwise specified, the IPA ADRION programme offers dedicated web site space on its own website for all funded projects to guarantee a coordinated visibility. A personalized project web site is eligible only if expressly mentioned in the approved AF;
- Heavy investments, infrastructures and works;
- Orchestras and shows unless clearly described in the AF and further approved.

Eligible expenditure/budget lines

Project budget must be disentangled according to the following budget lines:



Staff costs

Staff costs refer to the gross employment costs of staff employed by the beneficiary organization (LP or PP) for implementing the project. Staff can either be already employed by the beneficiary or employed/contracted¹⁴ specifically for the project implementation.

Staff costs can be calculated according to the following options:

- A) Real cost, calculated as explained below;
- B) Flat rate of 20% of the direct costs other than staff.

Each beneficiary must choose one of the above reimbursement options **already when drafting the project proposal**. The same reimbursement option will then apply to all staff members of the beneficiary working in this project and it will be set for the entire project duration. The chosen option cannot be changed during project implementation.

If option A is selected (Real cost), Staff costs shall be limited to the following:

- a) salary payments related to the activities which the entity would not carry out if the operation concerned was not undertaken, provided for in an employment document, either in the form of an employment or work contract or an appointment decision, or by law, and relating to responsibilities specified in the job description of the staff member concerned;
- b) any other costs directly linked to salary payments incurred and paid by the employer, such as employment taxes and social security including pensions as covered by Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹⁵, on condition that they are:
 - (i) provided for in an employment document or by law;
 - (ii) in accordance with the legislation referred to in the employment document and with standard practices in the country or the organisation where the individual staff member is actually working, or both; and
 - (iii) not recoverable by the employer.

Salary payments related to the activities which the entity would not carry out if the operation concerned was not undertaken, fixed in an employment document (employment contract or appointment decision) or by law, relating to responsibilities specified in the job description of the staff member concerned.

The following refers to Italian partners only: payments to natural persons working for the beneficiary under a contract other than an employment/work contract may be assimilated to salary payments and such costs are eligible under staff costs only when the following conditions are met:

- The person works under the beneficiary's instructions and, unless otherwise agreed with the beneficiary, on the beneficiary's premises;
- The result of the work carried out belongs to the beneficiary;
- The costs are not significantly different from those for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

If those conditions are not met, this expenditure must be allocated under budget line External expertise and services costs.

¹⁴ Contracted or employed, depending on the national labour legislation.

¹⁵ Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems.

Any other costs directly linked to salary payments incurred and paid by the employer (such as employment taxes and social security including pensions) as covered by Regulation (EC) N 883/2004 provided that they are:

- Fixed in an employment document or by law;
- In accordance with the legislation referred to in the employment document and with standard practices in the country and/or institution where the individual staff member is working;
- Not recoverable by the employer.

Methods for calculating the eligible staff cost vary according to the type of assignment to any individual staff member, as specified below:

1. **Full time:** an employee dedicated 100% of his/her working time to the project. The full-time assignment to the project must be included in the employment/work contract or in a specific statement/order issued by the partner structure. No registration of the working time (e.g., time sheets) is required. In such cases the total of the gross employment cost is eligible.
2. **Part-time with a fixed percentage of time worked per month:** an employee dedicated to the project by a fixed percentage of his/her working time. This percentage is set out in a document issued by the partner at the beginning of the project, and/or in the same employment/work contract. The fixed percentage can change in duly justified cases, however not in the middle of the fixed reporting period. No registration of the working time (e.g., time sheets) is required. In such cases the **fixed percentage of the gross employment cost is eligible.**
3. **Part-time with a flexible number of hours worked per month:** an employee dedicated to the project by a flexible percentage of his/her working time. For the purposes of determining direct staff costs, an hourly rate may be calculated in one of the following ways:
 - (a) by dividing the latest documented annual gross employment costs by 1720 hours for persons working full time, or by a corresponding pro-rata of 1720 hours, for persons working part-time;¹⁶
 - (b) by dividing the latest documented monthly gross employment costs by the average monthly working time of the person concerned in accordance with applicable national rules referred to in the employment or work contract or an appointment decision (both referred to as the employment document).

When applying the hourly rate calculated, the total number of hours declared per person for a given year or month shall not exceed the number of hours used for the calculation of that hourly rate. Where annual gross employment costs are not available, they may be derived from the available documented gross employment costs or from the employment document, duly adjusted for a 12-month period.

Eligible staff cost shall result by multiplying the hourly rate by the number of hours actually worked on the project by each concerned staff, as resulting from the working time registration system (e.g., time sheets) covering 100% of the actual working time of the individual concerned.

The programme recommends the use of the above-listed methods No 1 or No 2 of the real cost option.

If option B) is chosen, beneficiaries do not need to document that staff expenditure has been incurred and paid or that the amount corresponds to reality: as a consequence of that, no documentation on staff costs needs to be provided to the national controller. However, list of staff members working on the project and

¹⁶ Reference to the last accounting year should be made or, in case of missing data, a projection should be carried out.

any other employment document shall be provided to the controller on request (e.g., to check the eligibility of travel and accommodation costs). Moreover, the PP has to demonstrate that at least one employee is involved in the project.

In case the flat rate method is applied, the flat rate covers all items mentioned under the real costs option.

Example for the calculation of 20% flat rate:

Reported eligible direct costs (reimbursed on real costs basis):

Travel & accommodation costs: EUR 15.000

External expertise and service costs: EUR 50.000

Equipment costs: EUR 30.000

Total: EUR 95.000

Eligible Staff costs (flat rate 20%) = EUR 95.000 X 20% = EUR 19.000

Office and administrative costs

Office and administrative costs shall be limited to the following elements:

- a) Office rent;
- b) Insurance and taxes related to the buildings where the staff is located and to the equipment of the office (e.g., fire, theft insurances);
- c) Utilities (e.g., electricity, heating, water);
- d) Office supplies;
- e) General accounting provided inside the beneficiary organisation;
- f) Archives;
- g) Maintenance, cleaning and repairs;
- h) Security;
- i) IT systems;
- j) Communication (e.g., telephone, fax, internet, postal services, business cards);
- k) Bank charges for opening and administering the account or accounts where the implementation of an operation requires a separate account to be opened;
- l) Charges for transnational financial transactions.

Office and administrative costs shall be calculated as a flat rate of 15% of eligible staff costs (no matter whether they are calculated as real costs or flat rate).

No detailed budget needs to be drafted since the expenditure is automatically calculated by JEMS both in the application phase and when submitting financial progress reports.

The calculation for office and administrative costs is done automatically in every project report, taking into account the amount of eligible staff costs. The calculated expenditure is not checked by the controller and does not require any accountancy. However, if part of staff costs used as calculation basis for determining the amount of office and administrative expenditure is found to be ineligible, the corresponding amount of office and administrative expenditure shall be reduced accordingly.

No further justification or supporting document is needed from the PPs.

Office and administrative expenditure shall not be claimed as direct cost under any other cost category.

If no staff costs are declared in one reporting period, no office and administrative cost will be calculated and reimbursed.

Example for the calculation of 15% flat rate:

Reported eligible staff costs: EUR 15.000

Eligible Office and administrative costs = EUR 15.000 X 15% = EUR 2.250

Travel and accommodation costs

Expenditure under this budget line refers to the costs incurred by the beneficiary organisation for travel and accommodation incurred and paid inside or outside the programme area, of its own staff necessary for the delivery of the project.

Such costs shall be limited to the following elements:

- a) Travel costs (such as tickets, travel and car insurance, fuel, car mileage, toll, and parking fees);
- b) The cost of meals;
- c) Accommodation costs;
- d) Visa costs;
- e) Daily allowances.

Any cost element listed in points a) to d) covered by a daily allowance shall not be reimbursed in addition to the daily allowance.

Travel and accommodation costs of external experts and service providers including speakers, chairpersons, teachers, fall under external expertise and services costs.

Direct payment of expenditure for cost elements listed in points a) to d) by an employee of the beneficiary shall be supported by a proof of reimbursement by the beneficiary to that employee.

The following principles apply:

- Travel and accommodation costs must clearly link to any project's activities and be essential for their effective delivery;
- Costs must be definitely borne by the beneficiary organisation (direct payment by a staff member of the partner organisation must be supported by a proof of reimbursement from the employer);
- The principle of sound financial management shall guide to the choice of transport and accommodation. In line with the result-oriented policy approach, effectiveness should be the leading principle. In the second instance, cost-efficiency should be ensured, taking into account the entire cost of the mission (travel cost, staff costs related to the travel, etc.). In particular:
 - Beneficiaries must always choose the most economical modes of transport. Exceptions from this principle must be duly justified in each case;

- Accommodation costs can be accepted if they are in the middle price range, while higher price ranges must be duly justified in each case;
- Beneficiaries must respect either their ordinary internal rules for travel and accommodation costs (if any), or respect any maximum ceiling for travel and hotel costs established at national level, whichever is stricter;
- In the absence of internal and/or national rules, maximum ceilings for travel and accommodation established by the European Commission and applicable throughout the IPA ADRION programme area shall apply. They shall be considered as maximum ceilings¹⁷. The amounts exceeding such values shall be in any case considered not eligible.
- Any expenditure item defined as travel costs, accommodation costs, costs of meals or visa costs that is already covered by a daily allowance, cannot be accounted for and reimbursed in addition to the daily allowance, i.e., no double funding is allowed. Beneficiaries shall choose the accounting method (daily allowance or direct costs) which is closer to their ordinary practice and/or internal rules.

Travel and accommodation outside the IPA ADRION programme area must be clearly indicated in the AF. Costs of Associated Partners can only be claimed under the external expertise and services budget line.

When calculating travel and accommodation costs, expenditure to attend some meetings with programme, national authorities should be considered.

Travel and accommodation costs can be calculated according to the following options:

- A) Flat rate of 15% of the direct staff costs of IPA beneficiaries; flat rate of 10% of the direct staff costs of ERDF beneficiaries;
- B) Real costs.

The Programme recommends the use of the flat rate option.

Flat rate option can also apply if the beneficiary has chosen the flat rate calculation method for staff costs.

If travel and accommodation costs are calculated through flat rate, beneficiaries do not need to document that the expenditure has been incurred and paid or that the amount corresponds to reality: as a consequence of that, no documentation needs to be provided to the national controller.

The flat rate defined in the approved AF shall be automatically applied by the given PP for reporting travel and accommodation costs in each reporting period.

If part of the Staff costs used as calculation basis for determining the amount of Travel and accommodation costs is found to be ineligible, the corresponding amount of Travel and accommodation expenditure shall be automatically reduced accordingly. The chosen option cannot be changed during project implementation.

In case the flat rate method is applied, the flat rate covers all items mentioned under the real costs option.

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/unit-cost-decision-travel_en.pdf

Example for the calculation:

Reported eligible staff costs (irrespective if based on real costs or flat rate): EUR 30.000

IPA participating countries eligible Travel and Accommodation costs = EUR 30.000 X 15% = EUR 4.500

ERDF participating countries eligible Travel and Accommodation costs = EUR 30.000 X 10% = EUR 3.000

In case Travel and Accommodation costs are calculated as a flat rate of Staff costs calculated as a flat rate, they cannot be included in the basis to calculate the amount of the Staff costs.

The table below offers two examples of calculation of the Travel and Accommodation costs. Example A has Staff costs calculated on flat rate; example B has Staff costs calculated on real costs.

Example A:Costs based on flat rate:

External expertise and service: EUR 45.000

Equipment: EUR 25.000

Costs based on flat rate:

Staff costs: 20% of (EUR 45.000+ EUR 25.000) = EUR 14.000

Office and administrative costs: 15% of EUR 14.000 = EUR 2.100

IPA beneficiary Travel and accommodation costs: 15% of EUR 14.000 = EUR 2.100

ERDF beneficiary Travel and accommodation costs: 10% of EUR 14.000 = EUR 1.400

Example B:Costs based on real costs:

Staff costs: EUR 12.000

External expertise and service: EUR 25.000

Equipment: EUR 15.000

Costs based on flat rate:

Office and administrative costs: 15% of EUR 12.000 = EUR 1.800

IPA beneficiary Travel and accommodation costs: 15% of EUR 12.000 = EUR 1.800

ERDF beneficiary Travel and accommodation costs: 10% of EUR 12.000 = EUR 1.200

External expertise and services costs

Expenditure of external expertise and service costs shall be limited to the following services and expertise provided by a public or private body or natural person, other than the beneficiary, and all PPs:

- a) Studies or surveys (such as evaluations, strategies, concept notes, design plans, handbooks);
- b) Training;
- c) Translations;
- d) Development, modifications and updates to IT systems and website;
- e) Promotion, communication, publicity, promotional items and activities or information linked to an operation or to a programme as such;
- f) Financial management;
- g) Services related to the organisation and implementation of events or meetings (including rent, catering or interpretation);
- h) Participation in events (such as registration fees);
- i) Legal consultancy and notarial services, technical and financial expertise, other consultancy and accountancy services;
- j) Intellectual property rights;
- k) Verifications pursuant to point (a) of Article 74(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and Article 46(1) of this Regulation;
- l) *Omissis*¹⁸;
- m) *Omissis*¹⁹;
- n) The provision of guarantees by a bank or other financial institution where required by Union or national law or in a programming document adopted by the Monitoring Committee;
- o) Travel and accommodation for external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers;
- p) Other specific expertise and services needed for operations.

Eventual costs for promotional material (e.g.: leaflets, brochures, gadgets) must be allocated under this budget line and will be considered as eligible only if its efficacy in reaching one or more target groups is demonstrated.

External expertise and services have to be duly specified in the full AF by describing at least the nature and quantity of the expertise/service, the link to the relevant deliverable or output as listed in the work plan and the related budget of the concerned PP.

Costs referring to project-related tasks sub-contracted by the beneficiary to in-house bodies are eligible under external expertise and service budget line on condition that the following is met:

- Costs incurred by the in-house body are charged on a real costs basis without any profit margin;

¹⁸ The content of this point is not relevant for beneficiaries.

¹⁹ The content of this point is not relevant for beneficiaries.

- The sub-contracting to the in-house body of project related tasks complies with national and institutional public procurement provisions in force.

This budget line covers costs paid by beneficiaries to external experts and service providers on the basis of contracts or written agreements and against invoices or requests for reimbursement.

Sub-contracting between beneficiaries inside the same project partnership is not allowed.

Beneficiaries can sub-contract to external experts and service providers only tasks or activities which are essential for the implementation of the project.

When awarding external expertise and service contracts, all ERDF and IPA PPs must ensure that EU and national rules on public procurement are respected, in accordance with the amount of the contract. All contracts must comply with the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment as defined in the EC Treaty and the Commission Interpretative Communication on the Community law applicable to contract awards below the EU thresholds²⁰.

Beneficiaries shall respect relevant public procurement rules in force.

Furthermore, whenever public bodies or bodies governed by public law have defined internal rules for the purchase of goods and service below the minimum thresholds set by national laws, such internal rules must be respected.

Equipment costs

Costs for equipment purchased, rented or leased by the beneficiary of the operation other than those covered by office and administrative costs shall be limited to the following:

Eligible cost items under this budget line are:

- a) Office equipment;
- b) IT hardware and software;
- c) Furniture and fittings;
- d) Laboratory equipment;
- e) Machines and instruments,
- f) Tools or devices;
- g) Vehicles;
- h) Other specific equipment needed for the project.

Costs for the purchase of second-hand equipment may be eligible subject to the following conditions:

- (a) no other assistance has been received for it from the Interreg funds or from the funds listed in point (a) of Article 1(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060;
- (b) its price does not exceed the generally accepted price on the market in question; and
- (c) it has the technical characteristics necessary for the operation and complies with applicable norms and standards.

²⁰(<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/>)

Cost of equipment is only eligible if foreseen in the approved AF. During project implementation, purchase of any equipment not explicitly mentioned in the AF will have to be subject to prior approval by the MA/JS.

Projects are required to describe the nature, quantity and cost of each equipment item foreseen to be purchased, as well as to indicate the link with the deliverables and outputs foreseen in the work plan. In case of depreciation, it should be also illustrated how the costs for the project were calculated.

The selection of the suppliers for the purchasing, rental and/or leasing of any equipment item shall comply with the relevant public procurement rules in force.

Costs for infrastructure and works

As the IPA ADRION programme does not envisage the support to these activities, this budget line is not eligible.

Other option for the use of simplified costs

This option makes reference to Article 56.1 of CPR and it is an alternative to all the previously described provisions for real costs or flat rate calculations for the following budget lines: Office and administrative, Travel and Accommodation, External expertise and services and Equipment costs.

If a PP selects this methodology, direct staff costs (calculated only on real basis) is the category of eligible costs the rate of 40% is applied to, in order to calculate the remaining eligible costs of a partner's budget.

All the remaining costs of the partner's budget are calculated as the 40% of direct staff costs. As a result, only documentation related to Staff costs must be provided to the controller. All other costs are automatically calculated as the 40% of the eligible Staff costs, namely:

Partner's eligible costs = direct staff costs + remaining eligible costs (40%*direct staff costs).

In order to avoid the risk of double funding, the flat rate cannot be applied to staff costs calculated on the basis of a flat rate. (Article 68 b (2) CPR).

Example for the calculation of all other eligible costs as 40% of Staff costs:

Staff costs (based on real costs): EUR 45.000

All other costs = EUR 45.000 X 40% = EUR 18.000

Total budget = EUR 45.000+EUR 18.000 = EUR 63.000

As far as real costs are concerned, each envisaged expenditure must be detailed indicating the number of unit and its cost. Lack of this information shall impact the quality assessment of the project proposal.

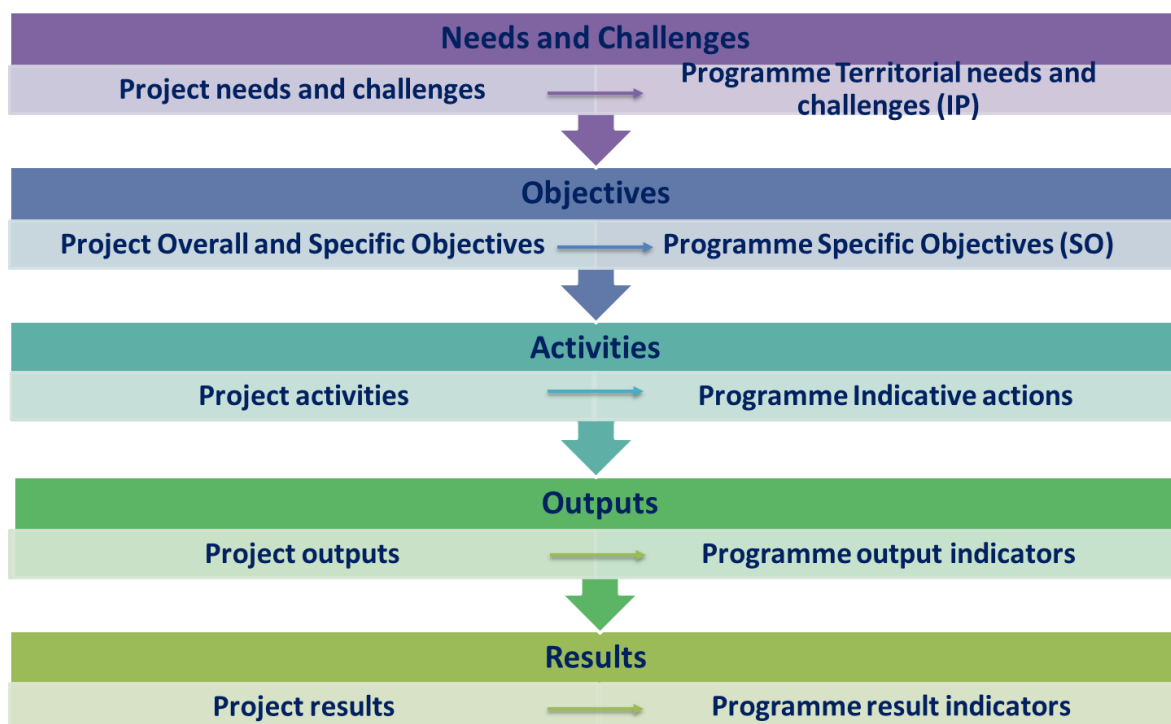
Project Intervention Logic

Projects funded by the IPA ADRION programme are required to follow the same **result-oriented approach** applied by the programme, clearly identifying the results and the change they are striving for, linking them with the territorial challenges and needs identified. **The project intervention logic should mirror the programme intervention logic. This is a pre-condition to be funded in the framework of the IPA ADRION programme.**

The **project intervention logic** must contain the following elements:

- The **project overall objective** that describes the **general, strategic and long-term change** the project intends to support for the benefit of the identified target group(s);
- The **project specific objective** that supports the implementation of the “project overall objective” and describes the **specific and immediate objective** of the project that can be realistically **achieved within the project lifetime**, through the deployment of the project activities, deliverables and outputs;
- **Project activities** are specific tasks or implementation steps for which resources are used and which contribute to the development of the project outputs and achievement of the project specific objectives. The project activities must have a logical sequence and be implemented for the direct benefit of the area/partners involved in the project.
- **Project deliverables** are side-products or services of the project that contribute to the development of a project's main output. They are outcomes of the project activities implementation (e.g., swot and/or sectoral analysis, feasibility studies; pilot actions report etc.). Each activity may include one or more deliverables.
- **Project outputs** are what shall be produced thanks to the funding awarded to the project (i.e.: strategy/action plan, pilot actions or joint solutions; training schemes; cooperation frameworks). **They must be captured by the programme output indicators and contribute to the achievement of project result(s).**
- The **project results** describe the **change** compared to the initial situation. They constitute the immediate advantage of carrying out the project, describing the benefit of using the project main outputs. **They must be captured by the programme result indicator.**

Links between the project and programme level and the intervention logic:



Projects not showing a clear link to a programme specific objective and the territorial needs and challenges, and/or not contributing to the respective expected programme results will not be supported by the IPA ADRIAN programme.

Projects must contribute to at least two programme output and result indicators.

Projects must ensure that the outputs and results achieved are durable even after the project closure. Therefore, projects are required to foresee follow up activities, policy level uptake, ownership, financing through other initiative or funds sources, in order to ensure the **sustainability of the project outputs and results** (see paragraph *Durability of operations*).

Project outputs and results

As reported in the paragraph *What the Programme funds*, the IPA ADRION programme shall support the implementation of activities clustered in 4 main output categories.

In the following pages, a definition of the expected outputs as well as their link with the IPA ADRION identified output and result indicators is provided.

It will be up to the applicants to identify the most suitable actions to reach the envisaged targets, taking into account the identified needs, state of art, actors involved and target groups.

Policy Instruments

The programme outputs foreseen under the output category “**Policy Instruments**” are related to the development and implementation of **joint strategies and action plans** on the main topics of interest of the area, along with the development of **solutions to overcome the legal and administrative obstacles across the borders**.

Strategy: it aims at establishing a targeted way to achieve a goal-oriented process in a specific domain. It must be understood as an integrated framework endorsed by the partnership addressing common challenges faced by a defined geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to the identified achievements. The strategy must aim at policy integration in the thematic domains selected and act as policy drivers above the national level, and must reflect the territorial needs and ensure its sustainability. It must provide a common vision; overview of the state of play of the area; as well as set mid-term and long-term goals and objectives, based on a SMART approach (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-based).

Action Plan: it must be understood as a strategic document that translates an existing jointly developed strategy into actions. It must indicate the necessary actions to be implemented in order to reach the envisaged objectives, along with the related timeline. It should be designed following an integrated approach ensuring the logic sequence of actions linked to the planned strategic goals, including the necessary elements to ensure their achievement and the financial resources.

Solutions to overcome legal and administrative obstacles: they must be understood as solutions solving/alleviating the legal or administrative obstacles across borders. Legal or administrative obstacles are in general identified on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the territorial context, which provides meaningful inputs on the functioning of legal and administrative frameworks. The identified solution(s) should be tailored to the specificities of each territory and cooperation context. The identified solution(s) should be accompanied by indications of possible actions to be taken for its potential implementation.

Strategies, action plans and solutions to overcome legal and administrative obstacles must be developed in a transnational context and must be adopted within the project lifetime or three months afterwards at the latest.

The jointly developed strategies and action plans, along with the joint solutions developed to overcome legal and administrative obstacles shall contribute to the following programme output and result indicators:

Output indicator definition	Result Indicator definition
RCO 83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed	RCR 79 - Joint Strategies and action plans taken up by the organizations
<p>The indicator counts the number of joint strategies or action plans developed by supported projects.</p> <p>A jointly developed strategy aims at establishing a targeted way to achieve a goal-oriented process in a specific domain. An action plan translates an existing jointly developed strategy into actions.</p> <p>Jointly developed strategy or action plan implies the involvement of the entire partnership participating countries in the drafting process of the strategy or action plan.</p>	<p>The indicator counts the number of joint strategies and action plans (not individual actions) adopted by organisations during or immediately after the project completion (three months afterwards at the latest). At the time of reporting this indicator, the implementation of the joint strategy or action plan need not to be completed but effectively started. The organisations involved in take-up may or may not be direct participants in the supported project. It is not necessary that all actions identified are taken-up for a strategy/action plan to be counted in this context.</p> <p>The uptake of the joint strategy and action plan must be documented by the adopting institutions (e.g. letters of commitment; institutional acts etc).</p>
RCO 117 - Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified	RCR 82 - Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved
<p>The indicator counts the number of solutions identified for resolving/ alleviating such legal or administrative obstacles across borders.</p> <p>Legal or administrative obstacles are in general identified on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the territorial context, which provides meaningful inputs on the functioning legal and administrative frameworks. The identified solution(s) should be customised according to the specificities of each territory and cooperation context.</p> <p>The development of solutions implies the involvement of partners from at least 2 partner States. In order to be counted in the indicator, an identified solution should be accompanied by indications of possible actions to be taken for its potential implementation.</p>	<p>Legal or administrative obstacles refer to rules, laws or administrative procedures which obstruct everyday life and the development of border regions.</p> <p>The indicator counts the number of legal or administrative obstacles that are alleviated or resolved based on solutions identified through supported projects.</p> <p>The adoption and implementation of the respective solutions should take place during the implementation of the project or immediately after the project completion (within 3 months after the project end date).</p> <p>The adoption and implementation of the respective solutions must be documented by the adopted organizations through decisions, acts of the adopted organization; letters of commitment; etc.</p>

Further information on the quantification, reporting and achievement of the output and result indicators can be found on Annex 2 of the present Manual.

Pilot actions and joint solutions

The programme outputs foreseen under the output category of “**Pilot actions and joint solutions**” refer to the development of “**pilot actions**” or “**joint innovative solutions**”.

Pilot actions: must be understood as testing, evaluating and/or demonstrating the feasibility, effectiveness and replicability in a transnational perspective. They must have an experimental or demonstration character. They may cover either the testing of innovative solutions or the demonstration of the application of existing solutions to a certain territory/sector. Additionally, it shall be limited in its scope (area, duration, scale, etc.) being unprecedented in a comparable environment. A pilot action includes a clear transnational effect being

jointly strived for and evaluated by the partnership, showing a clear potential to be transferred to other institutions and/or territories beyond the project.

The development and implementation of the pilot actions and solutions should be carried out jointly and in close cooperation among the parties, through transnational exchange of experience.

In the framework of the IPA ADRION programme, **pilot actions cannot consist in “infrastructure investments”**.

Joint innovative solutions: must be understood as innovative procedures, instruments or tools that can be physical (e.g.: a monitoring system) or soft (e.g.: methods or services). To be effective, an innovative solution must be tailored to end users’ needs and the respective framework conditions and has to be comprehensive and durable. Solutions must be implemented within the project lifetime and up-taken by several institutions.

Pilot actions must be developed in a transnational context and must be developed and implemented within the project lifetime.

Joint innovative solutions must be jointly developed, ensuring the involvement of the organizations from at least 2 participating countries.

The pilot actions and joint solutions developed contribute to the following programme output and result indicators:

Output indicator definition	Result Indicator definition
RCO 84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	RCR 104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations
<p>The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices.</p> <p>The pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented within the project; and</p> <p>The implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of the project.</p> <p>Jointly developed pilot action must be developed in a transnational context.</p>	<p>The indicator counts the number of solutions, other than legal or administrative solutions, that are developed by supported projects and are taken up or upscaled during the implementation of the project or within 3 months after the project end date.</p> <p>The organisation adopting the solutions developed by the project may or may not be a participant in the project.</p> <p>The uptake / up-scaling should be documented by the adopting organisations in, for instance, strategies, action plans etc.</p>
RCO 116 - Jointly developed solutions	
<p>The indicator counts the number of jointly developed solutions from joint pilot actions implemented by supported projects. In order to be counted in the indicator, an identified solution should include indications of the actions needed for it to be taken up or to be upscaled.</p> <p>A jointly developed solution implies the involvement of organizations from at least two participating countries.</p>	

Further information on the quantification; reporting and achievement of the output and result indicators can be found on Annex 2 of the present Manual.

Cooperation framework

The programme output foreseen under the output category of “**Cooperation framework**” aims to enhance the cooperation among the stakeholders of the area.

Cooperation stays at the heart of all Interreg projects. Without such cooperation, the implementation of the project activities is not possible. Projects are required to foster the cooperation among the PPs, including the associated ones, going beyond the project lifetime.

The aim is to set in place cooperation frameworks, as networks, governance structures or other forms that may sow the seeds of long-term cooperation and root networks in the area.

The creation of these networks and structures is required to be formally documented through cooperation agreements such as institutional commitments, etc.

The formal cooperation agreement must contain the goal of the cooperation, duties and responsibilities of the parties, the activities to be performed in cooperation and duration after the project end date.

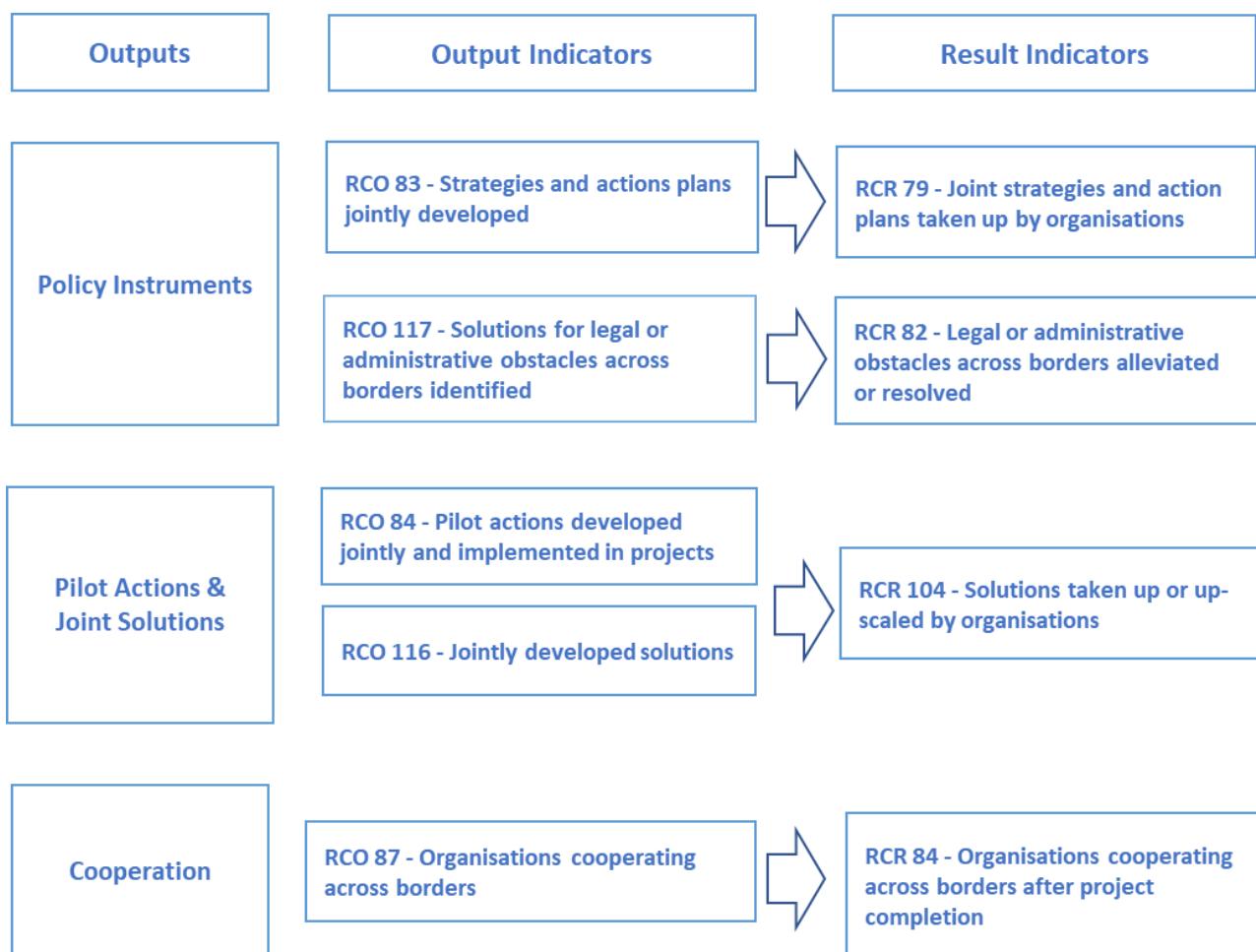
Considering the importance of the “cooperation” dimension for the programme, the output indicator RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders is mandatory for all projects.

The cooperation framework implementation contributes to the following programme output and result indicators:

Output indicator definition	Result Indicator definition
RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders	RCR 84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project lifetime
The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects . The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities including project partners and associated organizations included in the project Application Form .	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating across borders after the completion of the supported projects. The organisations are legal entities involved in project implementation, counted within RCO87. The cooperation concept should be based on a formal agreement among the parties to continue cooperation, after the end of the project. The cooperation agreements may be established during the implementation of the project or within 3 months from the project end date .

Further information on the quantification, reporting and achievement of the output and result indicators can be found on Annex 2 of the present Manual.

The overview table is provided below:



Durability of operations

Durability of project outcomes is a cornerstone to ensure long-lasting benefits to the territories where the project is implemented. Projects must ensure that what has been achieved is durable and will be further implemented/continued also after its finalization.

Envisaged project outcomes, e.g.: strategies, action plans, cooperation, shall ease projects follow-up, ownership and leverage of funds.

The project design shall, therefore, also consider the needs of the key stakeholders and the institutional context.

PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION AND SELECTION OF OPERATIONS

Application Package

The announcements of the call for proposals and the related application package will be published on the programme web site accessible at the following link www.adrioninterreg/index.php/IPA_ADRION_1stCall

The application package contains:

- The first call for proposals announcement;
- The present Application Manual;
- The IPA ADRION Cooperation Programme;
- The off-line Application Form;
- Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS) guidance;
- Subsidy Contract template;
- Partnership Agreement template;
- The compulsory templates to be filled in and attached to the AF:
 - LP declaration;
 - PP declarations;
 - Declaration of interest by each Associated Partners (if any).

Declarations shall:

- a) Be signed by the legal representative (or his/her authorized delegated person);
- b) Provided on the headed paper of the potential beneficiaries;
- c) Be dated;
- d) Be stamped.

Declarations must be scanned and uploaded together with the AF.

In case elements listed under letters b), c) or d) are missing, the MA/JS reserves the right to ask for integrations.

The absence of the signature -element a) - in the beneficiaries' declaration will cause the exclusion of the beneficiary; in case the absence of the signature affects the LP declaration, the project proposal will be rejected.

If two project partners do not meet the above requirements, the project proposal will be rejected.

Application Form

The project proposals shall be sent via JEMS through the filling-in of the pre-defined AF template; an off-line AF template is provided in the application package for information purpose only. Please note that when the

online AF is downloaded in pdf format from JEMS, small discrepancies may be found (e.g., different numbering of some boxes).

Applicants are warmly recommended to carefully read JEMS guidance when filling-in the AF. JEMS is provided with a set of blocks to guide the applicants and avoid the most common mistakes. Before the submission, the system provides an overview on detected errors that the applicants are invited to correct. The blocks – listed in the JEMS guidance – do not replace LP responsibility in finally checking the correctness of the AF before its submission: the LP is therefore warmly invited to check whether the AF has been correctly filled-in and no section or part of it has been left empty to avoid errors bringing to the ineligibility of the project proposal.

System blocks support applicants but do not replace the compliance with the administrative and eligibility requirements. The final responsibility of the completeness and correctness of the AF and related annexes remain within the LP.

The LPs are warmly recommended to fill-in their project proposals and to submit it without waiting the last days to avoid the risk of possible system slowing down.

Please note that complaints presented by the LP of project proposals submitted in the last 5 calendar days from the deadlines of the submission of the project proposals and related to the slowing down of JEMS will not be accepted.

Additionally, the IPA ADRION programme shall not accept any complaint from LP which failed to meet the deadline.

Project proposals shall use as project acronym only CAPITAL LETTERS.

For most of the sections, a maximum number of characters is fixed by the system.

The AF is structured as in the table below:

Application Form as in JEMS
A – Project identification
A.1 Project identification
A.2 Project summary (<i>free text box</i>)
A.3 Project budget overview (automatically generated)
A.4 Project outputs and result overview (automatically generated)
B – Project partners
B.1 Project partners
B.1.1 Partner identity
B.1.2 Partner address (<i>free text boxes except ‘Country’</i>)
B.1.4 Legal representative (Contact) (<i>free text boxes</i>)
B.1.5 Contact person (Contact) (<i>free text boxes</i>)
B.1.6 Partner motivation and contribution (<i>free text boxes</i>)
Budget
Co-financing (<i>drop-down menu</i>)
Associated partners

Legal representative <i>(free text boxes)</i>
Contact person <i>(free text boxes)</i>
C – Project description
C.1 Project overall objective <i>(free text box)</i>
C.2 Project relevance and context
C.2.1 What are the common territorial challenge(s) that will be tackled by the project? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.2.2 How does the project tackle identified common challenge(s) and/or opportunities and what is new about the approach the project takes? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.2.3 Why is transnational cooperation needed to achieve the project's objectives and results? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.2.4 Who will benefit from your project outputs? <i>(select target group from drop-down menu)</i>
C.2.5 How does the project contribute to wider strategies and policies? <i>(select strategy from drop-down menu)</i>
C.2.6 Which synergies with past or current EU and other projects or initiatives will the project make use of? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.2.7 How does the project build on available knowledge? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.3 Project partnership <i>(free text box)</i>
C.4 Project workplan (Thematic WPs including Capitalization WP)
C.5 Project results <i>(select result indicators from drop-down menu and fill-in the requested fields)</i>
C.6 Project time plan <i>(automatically generated)</i>
C.7 Project management
C.7.1 How will you coordinate your project? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.7.2 Which measures will you take to ensure quality in your project? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.7.3 What will be the general approach you will follow to communicate about your project? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.7.4 How do you foresee the financial management of the project and reporting procedures for activities and budget (within the partnership and towards the programme)? <i>(free text box)</i>
C.7.5 Cooperation criteria <i>(select from grid and fill-in the required fields)</i>
C.7.6 Horizontal principles <i>(choose the type of contribution and fill-in the required fields)</i>
C.8 Long-term plans
C.8.1 Ownership <i>(free text box)</i>
C.8.2 Durability <i>(free text box)</i>
C.8.3 Transferability <i>(free text box)</i>
Tables related to sections D and E will be downloadable from a separated excel file
D – Project budget
D.1 Project budget per co-financing source (Fund) – breakdown per partner <i>(automatically generated)</i>
D.2 Project budget – overview per partner/per cost category <i>(automatically generated)</i>
D.3 Overview budget/period
D.3.1 Project budget – overview per partner/per period <i>(automatically generated)</i>
D.3.2 Project budget – overview per fund/period <i>(automatically generated)</i>
E – Lump sums
E.1 Project lump sums <i>(fill-in the grid)</i>

Hereafter some instructions to correctly complete the AF are provided. Only some sections are explained in detail, while for others it has been considered that the title of the section itself is self-explanatory and clear enough. The provided information is for illustrative purpose only; it is up to the applicant to submit a complete AF and to decide which information should be provided with more or less detail. Depending on the information inserted in the AF, the quality of the proposal will be then evaluated in the assessment phase.

A. Project identification

This section contains different parts where it is requested to provide the main data of the project (e.g.: title, LP coordinates, duration, etc.) and a short overview with the main challenges, objectives, outputs, and approaches of the project. It also contains some automatically generated overviews on project budget and project outputs and results.

B. Project partners

This section includes a detailed description of each financing partner (identity, address, legal representative, contacts, partner's motivation, and contribution).

In accordance with the rules of the call for proposals, in the section budget it is necessary to indicate per each PP the partner budget options, meaning the optional or mandatory use of the flat rate for certain budget lines. The applicant should then insert all the planned costs for each budget lines, including information like the unit type, the price per unit, the number of units and the description of the expenditure.

In the section "co-financing", the applicant should select the source of co-financing and the status of the contribution.

A section for associated organisations (i.e., associated partners) is also present.

C. Project description

This section includes different parts:

- C.1 Project overall objective;
- C.2 Project relevance and context;
- C.3 Project partnership;
- C.4 Project work plan;
- C.5 Project results;
- C.6 Project time plan (automatically generated);
- C.7 Project management;
- C.8 Long-term plans.

Within **C.2** (Project relevance and context) it is requested to fill in different boxes with questions related to the territorial challenges tackled by the project, new proposed solutions and/or approaches, the need of transnational cooperation, the target groups benefitting from project outputs, the project contribution to wider strategies and policies, synergies with past or current initiatives, lessons learnt and capitalisation on the available knowledge.

Synergies with granted projects can be found in www.keep.eu, the repository of all EU Interreg projects; detailed information on the 2014-2020 ADRION programme can be found in <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/index.php/results/projects/project-websites/>.

In **C.3** (Project partnership) the applicant shall explain how the composition of the partnership can effectively implement the foreseen activities and deliver the planned outputs. The quality of a project depends to a high extent from the composition of the project partnership. Projects shall apply a result-oriented approach even in the involvement of the right actors in the partnership. The partnership needs to be tailored to challenges, objectives and results defined by the project. Two possible approaches (among others) which have proven to be effective for building a partnership are:

- **Triple and quadruple helix approach**, which requires the horizontal integration of competences from various sectors (research, public and business sectors and civil society). This approach is most fitting when, for example, new solutions, strategies and services are developed by the private sector, supported by public authorities with expertise coming from research.
- **Vertical, horizontal, or multilevel governance cooperation**, which brings together different governance levels in a participating country or a region while, at the same time, involving similar types of institutions located in different countries; examples can be:
 - a) ministries of different participating countries decide to set in place and implement a strategy on marine pollution in their national seas – horizontal cooperation;
 - b) a group of local authorities decide to implement guidance previously defined at EU/national level – horizontal cooperation;
 - c) national institutions define a strategy and other institutions at regional/local level implement pilot activities to test its implementation – multilevel governance cooperation.

The partnership composition should also reveal the benefits for the territories they represent.

Within **C.4** (Project work plan) it is requested to describe the work-packages of the project.

Project activities within the frame of the IPA ADRION programme shall be organised around **work packages**, i.e.: a group of related project activities necessary to produce project deliverables and outputs.

The organisation of the activities in work packages ensures a shared knowledge about the project's structure and objectives among all partners; additionally, it increases the capacities of the IPA ADRION programme MA/JS to follow up the implementation of the expected activities and facilitates the procedures for reporting and accounting of expenditure.

Each work package shall provide information on the PPs involved, the description of the related deliverables and expected outputs, and the related budget.

More specifically, each work package is composed of defined activities and related deliverables and expected outputs²¹.

Each work package must foresee at least one project output. The outputs must be developed and implemented within the project lifetime.

One main novelty compared to the previous programming period is that the work plan only includes thematic work packages and there are no separate work packages for Management and Communication activities.

²¹ For their definition, please refer to the paragraph *Project intervention logic*.

While the overall approach of management and internal communication has to be described in section C.7 of the AF, external communication is directly linked to support the dissemination and capitalisation of project outputs and results. To this end, communication objectives and activities shall be included in the thematic work-packages. Please refer to the dedicated section on Communication for more details.

Project should pay attention to a realistic timing of activities, deliverables and outputs.

Project management activities are to be considered as horizontal tasks and are, therefore, not to be described in the project work plan. Instead, a sound project management concept has to be presented in section C.7 of the Application Form (see below). Costs of management activities have anyway to be foreseen and included in the project budget.

C.5 (Project results) In this section the project results shall be defined and described in relation to the programme result indicators.

A result can be created through clicking on “Add result”. First, a programme result indicator has to be selected from the drop-down menu and then further information on target values and delivery date has to be provided. The project result shall then be described more concretely in the “Result description” field, including the benefit that the project main outputs will bring to the stakeholders/beneficiaries.

C.7 (Project management) This part is divided into several different other sections and includes a description of project coordination and internal communication.

In the different sections it will be requested to indicate:

- Who will be responsible for coordination;
- Which structures will be set in place (e.g.: project steering group)²²;
- Envisaged approaches and tools to evaluate the project quality;
- Who will coordinate the communication process;
- Which cooperation will be adopted by the partnership (joint development, joint implementation, joint financing and joint staffing which is the only one not obligatory);
- Which horizontal principles will be tackled by the project;
- Which contribution the project will offer.

C.8 (Long-term plans) This section is divided in three further sub-sections:

- C.8.1 Ownership;

²² The steering committee is a decision-making body at project level and shall be composed by duly authorised representatives of the LP and all PPs. The steering committee shall meet on a regular basis and be ruled by its own procedures. The steering committee may also involve the APs and other stakeholders external to the project partnership if so decided.

The steering committee shall, at least:

- a) Be responsible for the monitoring of the implemented activities;
- b) Be responsible of the monitoring of the achievement of set output and result indicators as envisaged the approved Application Form;
- c) Be responsible for the monitoring of the financial performance and of the eventual countermeasures to be adopted;
- d) Be informed and approve project deviations or changes, including changes within the partnership;
- e) Be responsible for the settlement of any disputes within the partnership;
- f) Be responsible for the setting in place of ad hoc working groups or task forces within the project if necessary.

- C.8.2 Durability;
- C.8.3 Transferability.

It is requested to describe the long-lasting effects of the project, including the future financial and institutional support, how outputs and deliverable will be useful for beneficiaries after the end of the project and how new different group of stakeholders could adapt or replicate the results of the project in their territories.

D. Project budget

This section of the AF shows some automatically generated overviews of the project budget. As already described in Section **B Project partners**, the budget has to be manually inserted for each partner. Section D only provides the overview of the already inserted expenditure.

E. Lump sums

If the partnership intends to include in the proposal preparation costs, they must be included here. Reported totals must correspond to the amounts inserted.

Project Communication

The importance of communication in the success of a project cannot be underestimated, as it strongly supports the achievements of results. Good communication helps establish strong relationships with stakeholders and target groups, increasing the chances to reach project goals; it also helps the project's objectives to be clearly understood by the target audiences and ensures dissemination of results to interested parties. To this end, the approach to communication should be clearly reflected in the project proposal.

The IPA ADRION programme has developed a common brand identity to ensure consistency across all approved projects. This includes a project logo and a poster, which are provided by the programme to contracted projects together with guidelines. In addition to that, the IPA ADRION programme aims to ensure that information about approved projects is easily accessible, durable, and consistent. To achieve this, each project will be provided with its own dedicated page on the programme website.

As a novelty compared to the 2014-2020 programming period, communication is not a standalone work package anymore, but it is embedded into each single work package. In other words, communication activities shall be integrated into the project work plan and support the achievements of the specific objectives laid down in the work packages. There is no requirement for a communication strategy anymore (even though it is strongly recommended); you are, however, asked to provide with information on your communication approach in specific section of the AF.

Some indications regarding the overall logic and purpose of the AF regarding project communication are provided below:

a) Section B.1.6 Partner motivation and contribution

If you are the potential beneficiary that will coordinate communication, please describe here what makes your institution suitable for this role.

b) Section C.4 Project workplan

To achieve a specific project objective, PPs may need to achieve also one or more communication objectives. Communication objectives support behavioural changes in the target audience, or knowledge and belief change. For example, to limit pollution in a city (project specific objective), they may need to: 1) Convince commuters to take the bus instead of their private car (communication objective 1); 2) Convince local politicians to put in place specific measures to reduce car traffic in the city

centre (objective 2), etc. These two examples of communication objectives require different communication activities and therefore need to be specified in the AF. Because projects are different, applicants may include zero, one or more communication objectives for each work package depending on what is relevant for their project.

c) C.7.1 How will you coordinate your project?

Who will be responsible for coordination? Will you have any other management structures (e.g., thematic groups, WP managers)? How will the internal communication work?

If communication helps coordinate the partnership (e.g. for reaching a common understanding, capacity building, etc.), then activities might be described here.

d) C.7.3 What will be the general approach you will follow to communicate about your project?

Who will coordinate project communication and how will he/she ensure the involvement of all partners? How will the communication function contribute to transferring your project results? Please note that all communication activities should be included in the work packages as an integral part of your project. There is no need to repeat this information here.

The approach you want to follow for your communication strategy must be clearly indicated here. You can outline communication tools, activities, strategies, and tactics to reach your project objectives. Moreover, If communication supports the general transfer of project results to target audiences by the whole partnership, then activities shall be described in this project management section.

Publicity and transparency of public funds

Besides the communication activities listed in the AF, as a beneficiary of EU funds, you must ensure that formal requirements stated in the Interreg Regulation are followed. Being co-financed by public funds, projects must make their funding source public for transparency reasons. To this end, the project must ensure that in the implementation phase compulsory activities are covered:

- Regular update of the project website;
- Display of the project poster;
- Provision of project logo on all types of documentation;
- Display of project information on websites' beneficiaries;
- Display of billboards informing about EU funding, if applicable.

Capitalisation

Activities related to capitalisation of results must be planned in advance, a roadmap of possible actions to be taken into account when results will be made available, is strongly recommended. To make new knowledge widely accessible, increase the impact of project results and promote their re-use and transfer, the programme strongly recommends to link capitalisation with communication activities which can contribute to influence policy debate or transfer tools beyond the project area. Furthermore, communication activities play an important role in ensuring that project outputs and results are effectively disseminated and used, ensuring that they have a lasting impact.

Following its previous experience, the IPA ADRION programme will continue to animate Thematic Clusters²³ providing with a platform to boost exchange of expertise and knowledge, as well as networking

²³ In 2019 the 2014-2020 ADRION Programme implemented a capitalization plan aiming to make the knowledge and results generated by funded projects widely accessible as well as to increase the opportunities for transferring of good practices. To facilitate exchanges on complementary topics, the Programme set-up 5 main Thematic Clusters and 6 sub-

opportunities. If willing to join the Thematic Clusters, the project shall dedicate activities and resources to be described and budgeted in the AF.

Possible capitalisation activities may concern:

- Participation to ADRION Thematic Clusters;
- Organization of macroregional events within the Thematic Cluster;
- Joint thematic meetings to exchange on projects' content and outputs;
- Exchange visits between projects or within the specific Thematic Cluster;
- Joint dissemination activities such as joint (final) conferences addressing common stakeholders.

Finally, capitalisation can be used both internally within the programme, but also externally for the purpose of cooperation and finding synergies with other programmes and/or initiatives.

Submission of applications

Applications must be submitted through the on-line system (JEMS) accessible via the programme web site.

LPs need to register on the JEMS and provide a set of credentials (username and password) to create and submit their AF on behalf of the entire partnership.

Interested LPs are invited to access JEMS for the purpose of creating credentials (ID and Password) as early as possible.

Credentials must refer to the LP contact person (as indicated in the AF): general e-mail address (e.g.: info@xxxxx.xx) should be avoided. All communications shall be sent to that email address.

Once inside JEMS, the LP must select the call it wants to apply for (please refer to the instructions provided in the JEMS guidance).

Applications must be drawn up in English, using the on-line form specifically designed for this purpose.

Applications must be submitted by the set deadline (CET/Bologna time) reported in the announcement of the call for proposals.

No other method of submission of an application will be accepted. No exceptions will be made.

The LP shall regularly inform the other PPs on the communications received through JEMS.

Interested potential applicants are requested to submit their project proposals through a one-step application procedure, i.e., the submission of the project proposal in its entirety.

The submission process is paperless.

clusters on strategic fields, such as transport, mobility, nature conservation, blue and smart related growth, and sustainable tourism. The joint work of the ADRION Thematic Clusters gave inputs to each thematic sector by developing joint policy paper with scientific recommendations and roadmaps for influencing policy debate, new project ideas to be potentially funded, macroregional events and technical analysis.

Assessment of received applications

The assessment of the applications is coordinated by the MA and performed by the JS, with the support of the NCPs and of external experts selected through a dedicated Expression of Interest.

In order to ensure equal, fair and transparent approach, the project proposals are assessed according to a set of criteria and sub-criteria previously elaborated by the programme, approved by the MC and specified in Annexes 3 and 4. The results of the assessment are reported in a project assessment grid to be prepared for supporting the MC decision.

The MC is in charge of the final decision with regard to the proposals to be funded.

Only the information provided in the AF shall be subject to the assessment.

Admissibility and eligibility check

The admissibility and eligibility checks are aimed at ensuring the minimum project requirements.

Only those applications which successfully pass these checks will progress in the assessment process. The list of admissibility and eligibility checks to be fulfilled is provided in Annex 3.

The verification of the presence of all the requirements is performed by the JS with the support of the NCPs which will be mainly in charge of verifying the correctness of the applicants' legal status. Applicants can be contacted by their NCPs for the submission of further documentation aimed at confirming their declarations or other formal statements included in the AF.

Results of the admissibility/eligibility check shall be communicated to the MC for approval.

All LPs shall be informed about the results of the admissibility and eligibility checks.

Quality assessment

Only the applications that have passed the admissibility and eligibility checks shall be assessed from a quality point of view.

The goal of the quality assessment is to provide to the MC an overall picture containing the relevant information on the relevance and feasibility of project proposals on which the decision whether the project should be funded or not can be based.

The quality assessment shall be performed by the JS with the support of thematic external experts.

As mentioned above, the assessment is performed according to a list of quality criteria and sub-criteria.

The quality assessment criteria are divided into two groups:

1. **Strategic assessment criteria** - whose main aim is to determine the extent of the project's contribution to the achievement of Programme objectives (contribution to programme results), by addressing joint or common target group needs.
2. **Operational assessment criteria** - whose main aim is to assess the viability and the feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its value for money in terms of resources used vs. results delivered.

Strategic assessment Group 1	Criteria	Max score
	Project relevance	20

	<i>Project intervention logic</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>Partnership relevance</i>	<i>10</i>
	<i>Cooperation character</i>	<i>10</i>
	TOTAL	60
Operational assessment Group 2	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Max score</i>
	<i>Work plan</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>Communication</i>	<i>10</i>
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>20</i>
	TOTAL	50
Overall assessment		Max score 110

Moreover, each sub-criterion will be attributed a score ranging from 1 to 5 according to the following grid:

5	Excellent – the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is of excellent quality and provides clear and coherent information
4	Good – the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is clear and contain minor shortcomings
3	Fair - the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is sufficiently clear and requires further clarification from the applicant
2	Sufficient - the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is of low quality
1	Poor - the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion does not meet the requirement/the information is not present

The total score of each criterion is the sum of the scores attributed to each sub-criterion. Maximum scores for each sub-criterion are provided in the Annex 4 - Quality assessment grid.

The score attributed to each group of criteria is the sum of the scores attributed to each criterion.

The overall project score will result from summing up of each group of criteria category/criterion score.

The quality assessment will be organised in two steps: first, projects will undergo a strategic assessment according to the criteria of group 1.

Strategic assessment

Only the project proposals having reached an overall score of **at least 36/60 (60%** of the overall score related to strategic elements) will progress to the Operational assessment and be appraised according to the criteria of group 2.

Operational assessment

As far as the Operational Assessment is concerned, the proposals not reaching **at least 30/50 (60%** of the overall score related to operational assessment) will be rejected.

Only those proposals having passed the quality assessment (Strategic and Operational) with a score of 66/110 (**60%** of the overall maximum score) shall be appraised according to the further following steps described below (ref. paragraph ***Finalization of the project assessment grid***).

The list of the quality assessment criteria and related sub-criteria (strategic and operational) are provided in Annex 4.

Anti-fraud check

The anti-fraud check consists of the verification of previous fraudulent behaviours or other fraudulent practices by the partners involved in the project proposal.

The anti-fraud check shall take place only on those applications which successfully passed all the previous checks described in the appraisal process.

The check will be done by MA/relevant national authorities with the support of the NCPs and with the use of tools and practices currently in use (e.g.: cross checks with the national authorities administering other funds, knowledge of previous fraudulent applications and other fraudulent practice; use of EU databases).

In case the fraudulent behaviour/practice affects:

- a) the LP: the project proposal shall be rejected;
- b) a PP: it will be excluded from the project proposal; in case the exclusion of such PP(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements this will cause the rejection of the project proposal.

Please note that in case the project proposal suffers from the overall exclusion of at least two Project Partners, the project proposal shall be rejected.

Verification on absence of double funding

In accordance with Art. 181.4.b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046 (Financing Regulation), and with what reported in the self-declaration signed by each applicant with regard to the exclusion from subsidy, MA/JS performs checks in order to exclude that the activities to be funded have been already granted to the same potential beneficiaries by Interreg Danube and EURO MED programmes.

Checks shall take place only on those applications which successfully passed all the previous checks described in the appraisal process.

Checks are performed through the analysis of approved applications of the aforementioned programmes dealing with similar topics and implemented by the same institutions involved in IPA ADRION project proposals recommended for funding.

In case the presence of double funding is confirmed, identified activities are considered as not eligible; this may imply the rejection of the project proposal.

State Aid compliance check

The State Aid check will be performed during the project assessment and will be based on the information provided in the AF. The check is performed by external experts; in case of clarifications, the LP may be contacted by the JS on behalf of the expert.

The State Aid check shall take place only on those applications which successfully passed the previous assessment steps.

State Aid discipline shall apply to all ERDF and IPA financing partners.

The State Aid assessment may bring to one or more of the following outcomes:

- a) **Project activities are not State Aid relevant.** In this case no contractual conditions are set on the Subsidy Contract;
- b) **Some project activities are State Aid relevant** (list shall be provided) but the application of the **State Aid discipline (*de minimis*) can be avoided if specific countermeasures apply** (list shall be provided). In such case, specific obligations will be introduced in the subsidy contract referring to the countermeasures applied to avoid the state aid discipline (*de minimis*) (e.g. wide dissemination of outputs, etc);
- c) **The application of the State Aid discipline for some activities cannot be avoided, bringing to the respect of the *de minimis* threshold to those specific activities and partners** (list shall be provided). In such case, specific contractual provisions will be introduced in the subsidy contract, indicating the activities and partners to which the State Aid discipline (*de-minimis*) applies.
- d) **Indirect State Aid granted to third parties** outside the project partnership. In such case, a contractual condition setting a threshold in accordance with GBER art.20a²⁴, referring to exemption of aid of limited amount in the context of INTERREG, will be introduced in the Subsidy Contract.

The specific contractual conditions set in the Subsidy Contract will be checked by the MA/JS during the project implementation in order to ensure their respect.

Projects assessed as State Aid relevant must be aware that some restrictions might be applied to them in relation of the possibility of future project modification.

Further details on the approach followed by the ADRION IPA programme can be found in Annex 5.

Finalization of the project assessment grid

The results of the assessment shall be reported in a project assessment grid to be submitted to the MC in charge of the funding decision. The assessed projects shall also be included in a ranking list according to the awarded overall final score expressed also in percentage of total maximum score.

Decision making and communication to the Lead Applicants

The decision for funding is adopted by the MC by consensus.

A project proposal can be:

- a) **Approved:** the proposal is considered ready to start, fulfilling the requested quality level and responding to the selection criteria;
- b) **Approved under conditions:** the proposal is considered approved provided that the LP and/or the PPs satisfy specific conditions within a given deadline;
- c) **Rejected:** the proposal is considered not matching a certain readiness and quality level and responding to the selection criteria.

²⁴ Article 20a of Regulation (EU) No.651/2014, introduced by the amending Regulation (EU) No.2021/1237.

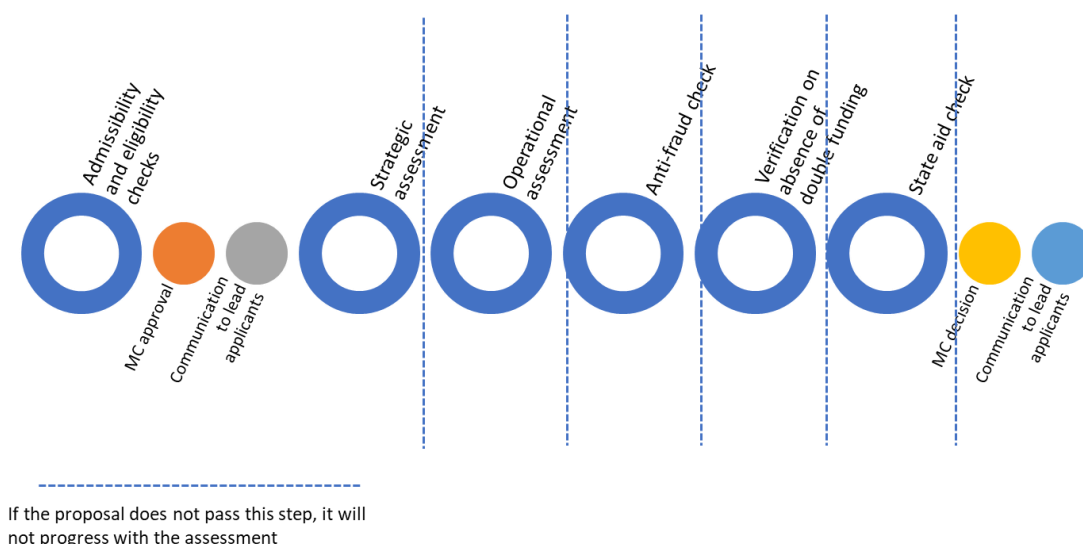
If a project proposal is funded under conditions, the latter are approved by the MC too; conditions may address project partnership, work plan and budget. A lower budget than the amount requested by the partnership may be also foreseen.

All LPs of the assessed projects shall be notified by MA/JS in written form about the MC decision. The LP shall immediately inform all the PPs accordingly.

Additionally:

- Under no circumstances the amount awarded may exceed the amount requested;
- The grant awarding does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

The picture below summarizes the assessment process:



Contractual provisions

De minimis declaration

In case the activities proposed in the approved projects by one or more beneficiaries are State Aid relevant, and the *de minimis* regime has to be applied, the concerned beneficiary shall provide, before the signature of the Subsidy Contract, a declaration including the total amount of *de minimis* aid granted by Italy, where the MA is located, if any, other than the grant to be received by the IPA ADRION programme.

Principle of non-cumulative award (double funding)

The LP, on behalf of its partnership, is required to provide the MA/JS a declaration stating that, at the time of signature of the Subsidy Contract, none of them has received other public funds – international, national,

regional or local – than those granted by the IPA ADRION programme for the implementation of the planned activities.

If, during project implementation, evidence emerges that an activity/item of expenditure which is being co-financed by IPA ADRION programme, is at the same time being co-financed by any other public fund, the MA may:

- Impose the modification of the concerned activities and/or exclude from the eligible expenditure the item which would be double financed;
- Withdraw from the subsidy contract and demand the repayment of amounts already disbursed.

During the implementation phase, the MA reserves the right to do additional checks if necessary.

Finalization of the assessment process

The assessment process should be finalized within the end of 2023. This estimate may be slightly adjusted upon need.

Project legal framework

Once the project is selected for funding and has fulfilled all the conditions for improvement set forth by the MC, a Subsidy Contract is offered by the MA.

The Subsidy Contract constitutes the main legal framework for the implementation of the project. It is an agreement that regulates the relations between the MA and the LP, which acts on behalf of the entire partnership in compliance to the “Lead Partner principle”. The Subsidy Contract confirms the final INTERREG funds allocation to the project, sets out the conditions for support and the implementing arrangements. It is drawn up in Euro.

In turn, the LP and PPs shall sign a Partnership Agreement, which rules the obligations within the partnership.

MA/JS shall proceed with the verification of the existence of the signatory person and its power of signature, before the Subsidy Contract is awarded.

LP has **one month** for accepting the subsidy offer sent by the MA/JS. Following the aforementioned the deadline, the MA offer loses its validity, unless MA agrees to prolong it.

In case of acceptance, the Subsidy Contract can either be digitally signed or hand signed by those LPs which do not have digital signature: in the latter case, the LP is required to send back to the MA two copies of the document, dated, initialled in each page and signed in full in the last one. The MA signs last and sends back a countersigned copy.

False declarations detected after the approval of the project will imply the exclusion of the concerned PPs from the partnership; if false declarations are provided by the LP, the subsidy contract will not be signed or withdrawn.

Advance payment

Following the signature of the Subsidy Contract and of the Partnership Agreement, the MA will proceed with the disbursement of a pre-financing amount **addressed only to the LP/PPs located in the IPA participating countries**.

The advanced payment is up to **20% of the Interreg funds** of the affected LP/PPs. The advance payment will be disbursed according to the availability of funds.

The advance payment shall be compensated with the last project payment.

In case the concerned IPA LP/PPs do not manage to submit enough validated expenditure for compensating the advance payment received, the MA/JS will adopt the necessary steps to ensure compensation of funds.

Payment procedure

The requests for reimbursement shall be submitted by the LP on behalf of the entire partnership for the periods covered by the related submitted project reports.

Publicity by the Programme

Based on art. 49 of CPR, the MA shall publish the list of projects selected, containing the following data:

- Beneficiary name (the legal entities);
- Project name;
- The purpose of the project and its expected achievements.
- Project start date;
- Project end date;
- Total cost of the project;
- Funds concerned;
- Specific objective concerned;
- Union co-financing rate;
- Location of the beneficiaries;
- Type of intervention.

Complaints procedure

According to art 69 of CPR, complaints cover any dispute raised by potential and selected beneficiaries regarding the proposed or selected projects, as well as any dispute with third parties on the implementation of the programme or the selected project.

For the resolution of these complaints, the IPA ADRION programme shall set in place the following procedures based on their specificities:

- Complaints related to project selection;

- Complaints related to project implementation.

Complaints related to project selection

As highlighted in the previous sections, following the MC decision on the selection of the projects, the MA/JS informs the LP in a written form related to such decision. Following such communication, the LP has the availability of 10 working days to submit a complaint concerning the MC decision on its project proposal.

Any complaint related to the assessment and selection of the project proposals shall be addressed by the LP, on behalf of the entire partnership, to the MA. The MA, with the support of the JS and/or experts, shall examine it and provide its position regarding the merit of the complaint.

Complaints received by PPs individually shall not be taken into consideration.

Receivable complaints must be clearly identifiable by the wording “formal complaint”, project number and acronym in the subject of the request. The formal complaint must be submitted in English to the following email address: info@interregadrion.eu. The LP shall be in charge of specifying what failures or mistakes have been assumed to occur during the selection process and include clear reference to programme documents (e.g. call announcement; the present manual, etc).

Requests for information or clarifications shall not be considered as complaints.

Please note that complaints presented by LPs of project proposals submitted in the last 5 calendar days from the deadlines for the submission of the project proposals and related to the slowing down of JEMS system will not be accepted. Additionally, the IPA ADRION programme shall not accept any complaint from LPs which failed to meet the deadline.

The MA shall be in charge of verifying the admissibility of the request from the formal point of view. If the complaint is considered admissible, it will be submitted to the Complaint Committee.

The Complaint Committee is composed by two MC participating countries representatives - current and future MC Chair - and the MA. The JS is involved with an advisory function.

The complaint can only refer to:

- a) Outcomes of the admissibility and eligibility checks;
- b) The respect of the assessment process/procedure.

The outcome of the Complaint Committee decision shall be communicated by the MA, in written form, to the LP.

The Complaint Committee decision will be final, binding to all parties and not subject to any further complaint proceedings within the programme if it is based on the same grounds.

Complaints related to project implementation

On the project implementation phase, the following types of complaints are foreseen:

- **Complaints related to MA/JS on the implementation of the Subsidy Contract**

The LP, on behalf of the partnership may submit a complaint in relation to an act; a decision or omissions of the MA/JS or related to any issue covered by the subsidy contract. Following the complaint, the MA/JS shall put in place a mediation procedure. If an agreement cannot be reached among the parties, the LP is entitled to address its complaint to the competent court jurisdiction (i.e., Civil Court of Bologna) as laid down in the subsidy contract of the project. Italian law shall apply to all legal relations arising in relation to the subsidy contract.

- **Complaints related to Audit and Control Bodies**

Complaints related to decisions, acts or omissions of the control and audit bodies (national controllers; auditors or any other national or EU institution) must be addressed to the responsible authority or participating country institution in charge for these controls according to the procedures laid down at national and EU level.

- **Any other complaint outside the competence of MA/JS**

Complaints against any other person or institution that might affect the activities or the rights of beneficiaries or partners and that are outside the sphere of the competence of the MA/JS shall be submitted directly to the employing or contracting institution or competent administrative offices and must not be addressed to MA.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interests exists where the impartial and objective exercise of the functions of a financial actor or other person is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect personal interest.

Beneficiaries are required to undertake all the necessary measures to minimise the risk of conflict of interest during the procurement process. They are required to ensure that the decision-making process is transparent, fair, and equal for all the tenderers involved in the procurement process.

Particular attention should be paid to the cases, where the project staff is involved in external companies participating in tender procedures launched by the respective PP.

In order to prevent properly any potential conflict of interest, it is recommended to refer to the “*Commission Notice Guidance on the avoidance and management of conflicts of interest under the Financial Regulation 2021/c 121/01*” available at the following link:

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021XC0409\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021XC0409(01)&from=EN)

Monitoring of performance and midterm review

Each granted project shall be subject to a midterm review.

The midterm review intends to measure the achievements of the projects in relation to the approved AF.

Achievements shall refer to:

- a) Respect of work plan implementation and delivery of planned outputs;
- b) Achievement of set quantified goals (output indicators);
- c) Financial absorption in relation to the approved work plan.

As far as point c) is concerned, the maximum acceptable Interreg budget underspending after three reporting periods (i.e.: after 18 months’ implementation) is of 20% of the spending forecast.

An underspending rate higher than the threshold above, may bring to the project Interreg budget reduction for the exceeding percentage. Budget reduction shall be approved by the MC.

In case the programme suffers from decommitment, further budget revision could be envisaged.

The project assessment shall negatively consider eventual artificial budget shifting to the very last project periods to avoid the possible budget revision; this means that the distribution of the budget through periods must mirror the activities to be implemented in each period.

Synergies with other programmes and EU initiatives

Good performing projects shall be introduced by MA/JS to further programmes and EU initiatives to allow fast-track approaches to ensure their involvement in wider EU networks or the access to additional public funds.

Support to potential beneficiaries

The IPA ADRION MA/JS at programme level and NCPs at national level shall support potential applicants through:

- Dedicated events in hybrid form (on-line and in person);
- Dedicated information on the programme web site and on the NCPs dedicated web pages;
- Support to beneficiaries via email (info@interregadrion.eu), and meetings.

It is warmly recommended that the Lead Applicants address the JS and Project Partners applicants their NCPs.

Support of the JS and NCPs may not be ensured after 19 June 2023.

Annex 1 -Overview of IPA ADRION Priority Axes, Specific Objectives and indicative actions to be granted under the first call for proposals.

Priority Axis 1 Supporting a Smarter Adriatic and Ionian region	
Specific Objective 1.1 Strengthening innovation capacities in the Adriatic - Ionian region	
Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area	<p>The Adriatic-Ionian region does not stand out for its innovation and R&D capacities, level of digitalisation in the private and public sectors or readiness for internationalisation. Especially small, medium, and micro enterprises that build the cornerstone of local economies are, in all sectors, significantly exposed to digital transformation. Additionally, the area is interested by a high level of economic competitiveness and social gaps among various regions, with direct impact on the region's capacity to cooperate, especially when it comes to innovation and knowledge intensive services, including social innovation. The clusters' landscape is still embryonic, while research centres, public authorities and private companies do not fully capitalize on the advantages of cooperation in related key sectors. This hampers the exchange between research and business communities as well as technology transfer and capacity building. Such networking and cooperation are preconditions to enhancing growth and competitiveness through innovative and smart solutions.</p> <p>Thus, joint measures to improve innovation capabilities and to make better use of the potentials of digital and economic transformation processes are of high relevance. Such actions include the promotion of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) to pool together existing capacities and assure critical mass with a focus on areas of mutual interest like sustainable blue economy, energy, ICT, energy and sustainable environment, smart mobility, innovative production technologies and advanced materials. Proposed actions shall also contribute, among else, to the harmonization of standards, job creation and better R&D cooperation between academia and private businesses on trans-regional level.</p> <p>To turn these strategies into practice, multi-level governance structures that enable trans-regional cooperation highlighting land and maritime Adriatic-Ionian specificities need to be supported. Clusters,</p> <p>transnational strategic partnerships, innovation networks and similar efforts aiming to assemble quadruple helix actors along important value chains are important tools to facilitate transnational cooperation that will be strengthened. While the above-mentioned efforts will improve the framework conditions of stakeholders, dedicated actions will be implemented to promote and scale-up the use of advanced technologies and encourage the development of transnationally designed products and services with clear preference of S3 priority areas.</p>
Thematic Focus of the first call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ S3 in common areas of specialization ○ Sustainable blue economy ○ Green innovation ○ Clean technologies ○ Industry 4.0 and digital technologies
Indicative actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop transnational Smart Specialization Strategies in the main areas of specialization of the Adriatic Ionian area as energy, ICT systems and technologies, energy and sustainable environment, disaster prevention, smart mobility, innovative production technologies and advanced materials, blue economy; ○ Promote and set-up multi-level governance schemes to facilitate transnational cooperation models to address challenges in common areas of specialization;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uptake, up-scale and test advanced technologies through pilot and joint actions, policies, tools, processes, particularly in, but not limited to, the main fields of interest of S3 (sectors as indicated in indicative action no.1); ○ Promote and encourage the development of transnationally designed innovations (technical and non technical innovation, including services) through pilot and joint actions contributing to face societal and environmental challenges like demographic change, energy efficiency or climate change. ○ Promote the development of transnational partnerships, cluster-to-cluster cooperation, innovative networks, and similar initiatives. ○ Promote digital divide reduction by enhancing digital solutions in the private and public sector, and digital capacity building. ○ Support the development of transnational and macro-regional clusters in the emerging sectors as advanced packaging; biopharmaceuticals, blue economy industries, logistical services, mobility tech, environment industries, etc (sectors as indicated in indicative action no.1). ○ Promote actions and measures supporting SMEs development and modernization including intellectual property, technical and financial issues; testing solutions closer to the market (i.e.: proof of concept mechanisms, etc.), as well as the introduction of quality and sustainable requirements.
--	--

Output Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	22
RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	44
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	132
RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	22

Result Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Target (2029)
RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	strategy/action plan	0	17
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	66
RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0	17

Expected Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting in place a favourable framework on the main strategic areas of interest. ○ Boost the capacities and potentials of the innovation players; ○ Facilitate innovation gaps closing and support technology transfer and new technologies uptake.
-------------------------	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revamp traditional sectors and shape emerging ones; ○ Produce leverage effects for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level.
Target groups	<p>Target groups comprise: triple or quadruple innovation helix system capable of innovation-generating processes (industry, university, government, civil society) and interaction aimed at accelerating the transfer of research and innovation results to promote regional growth i.e.: local, regional and national public authorities, organisations responsible for research and development, innovation, technology transfer institutions established and managed by public authorities, sectoral and regional development agencies, networks, cluster initiatives and associations, universities and research facilities, business support organisations (e.g. chambers of commerce, business innovation centres, technology information centres), higher education, education/training centres and schools, NGOs, non- profit organisations, SMEs, industrial and technological hubs and parks.</p>

Priority Axis 2	
Supporting a greener and climate resilient Adriatic-Ionian region	
Specific Objective 2.1	
Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches in the Adriatic and Ionian region	
Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area	<p>The Adriatic-Ionian region is a unique area of biodiversity hosting the highest number of UNESCO sites. Natural and cultural heritage are its world-renowned hallmark, despite the growing menace of climate change – the area is a hotspot. The same area is unfortunately also known for its unruly productive activities and heavy pollution. Its fragile environmental context is also subject to natural disasters (e.g.: earthquakes) and man-made disasters also linked to heavy sea traffic (e.g.: oil spills, air, soil and sea pollution).</p> <p>Adverse extreme weather events due to climate change are quickly increasing in the Adriatic Ionian area. Long heat waves, drought, wildfires and heavy rainfall are all events threatening the area's biodiversity, production activities and health. The area needs to set in place urgent transnational resilient nature-based measures as well as an improved risk preparedness and management. Transnational cooperation is the added value that will indeed contribute to addressing the need for increasing the region's resilience to climate change, identifying and implementing related adaptation policies, as well as increasing risk awareness, preparedness and risk forecasting with regard to natural and man-made disasters.</p>
Thematic Focus of the first call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Climate change ○ Natural and man-made disasters
Indicative actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop and implement integrated joint transnational strategies and measures aimed at enhancing the resilience to climate change of coastal, river basins, rural and mountainous areas through a harmonised framework of standards and indicators and use of already existing research results and contributions to EU platforms (e.g.: EU Risk Data Hub, Climate-ADAPT). ○ Develop and implement transnational joint action plans to coordinate measures addressed to natural and man-made disaster prevention and standardized responses (e.g.: intense rainfalls, floods, landslides, heatwaves, heat islands, draughts, wildfires, oil spill, plastics at sea, river contamination etc.) by prioritizing nature based solutions instead of traditional grey infrastructures. ○ Collect compelling information and use it to develop advocacy material to strengthen synergies and increase preparedness among local/regional/national civil protection bodies on natural and man-made risks. ○ Implement pilot actions for a shared and coordinated use of big data for modelling, early forecasting and warning systems to reduce climate change risks.

Output Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	28
RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	18
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	114
RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	9

Result Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Target (2029)
RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	strategy/action plan	0	21
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	57
RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0	9

Expected Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing shared transnational and macro-regional actions to face climate change and prevent natural and man-made disasters; ○ Boost policy learning, improve awareness and strengthen transnational dialogue; ○ Leverage for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level.
Target groups	Target groups comprise: Adriatic-Ionian population, who will directly benefit from the proposed measures; local, regional and national public authority policy makers, NGOs, non-profit organisations, public and private innovation and development agencies, research institutions, rescue and emergency organizations, training organisations, SMEs.

Priority Axis 2	
Supporting a greener and climate resilient Adriatic-Ionian region	
Specific Objective 2.2	
Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy in the Adriatic and Ionian area	
Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area	<p>Although the definition of circular economy, as opposed to the current linear economy, is familiar to us today, its practices, tools, possibilities, and opportunities are much less so and its implementation rather uneven in the area. Circular economy implies a change of mindset: products and materials are used and reused as long as possible; exploitation of new resources is minimized, waste and second life used material are considered as valuable resources. The advantages of this approach are manifold: from the creation of new job opportunities to the improvement of the population's health (e.g.: landfilling reduction), to the price reduction of goods, etc.</p> <p>In line with the EU Green Deal, the Adriatic - Ionian region must respond to the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change through an effective protection and restoring of biodiversity, as well as pollution reduction. However, the programme area still has considerable gaps in waste management capacities and in the use of efficient resources, impacting on the possibilities of cooperation and industrial production synergies. Transnational cooperation can help Adriatic-Ionian participating countries to scale up circular economy, by facilitating the spread of front-runners' experiences and practices towards mainstream economic players in the following domains: exchange of knowledge, practice, and development of skills on integrated and systemic approaches for recycling municipal and marine waste to increase the rate and quality of recycled materials (e.g.: organic, plastics, metals, glass, electronic devices, etc.).</p> <p>Moreover, transnational cooperation can contribute to the setting in place of policies and strategies aimed, in particular, at identifying common solutions for shared problems (e.g.: plastic marine litter and related recycling) and facilitating cooperation between public and private sectors as the involvement in circular economy measures affects both the Adriatic-Ionian population and the public and private institutions directly benefitting from the outcomes of the envisaged measures, acting both on the demand and on the supply end of the market.</p>
Thematic Focus of the first call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Circular and resource efficient economy ○ Waste management
Indicative actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collect compelling information, implement exchange of experience, and test actions to develop advocacy material to increase knowledge and preparedness among policy makers and public administrators on the potentials of circular economy, and test actions/ experience exchange for practical implementation. ○ Identify and implement transnational action plans and strategies to enhance and/or scale up circular economy at regional/national/macro-regional level (e.g.: setting up transnational/networks for secondary raw materials, creating transnational marketplaces for recycling/up-recycling products). ○ Set in place joint actions and innovation networks to test science-based solutions aimed at collecting and recycling marine litter (e.g.: plastic litter, plastic fishing gear etc.).

Output Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	12

RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	24
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	48
RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	8

Result Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Target (2029)
RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	strategy/action plan	0	9
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	24
RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0	6

Expected Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing awareness, changing the behaviour of citizens, consumers and policy makers; ○ Improving the related policy framework; ○ Leverage for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level affecting both public and private stakeholders.
Target groups	Target groups comprise: public authorities at local, regional, and national level, policy makers, agencies, research organizations, innovation and development agencies, business support organisations, NGOs, non-profit organisations, universities and training institutions, SMEs.

Priority Axis 2	
Supporting a greener and climate resilient Adriatic-Ionian region	
Specific Objective 2.3	
Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution in the Adriatic and Ionian region	
Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area	<p>The Adriatic-Ionian region is a unique area of biodiversity hosting the highest number of UNESCO sites. Natural and cultural heritage are its world-renowned hallmark, despite the growing menace of climate change – the area is a hotspot. The same area is unfortunately also known for its unruly productive activities and heavy pollution. Its fragile environmental context is also subject to natural disasters (e.g.: earthquakes) and man-made disasters also linked to heavy sea traffic (e.g.: oil spills, air, soil and sea pollution).</p> <p>The world renowned unique biodiversity of the Adriatic-Ionian region is threatened by an unruly overexploitation of its resources. Unsustainable economic activities and seasonal mass-tourism have led to polluted water, soil and air and overall loss of biodiversity. Transnational cooperation can provide an effective basis for shared approaches, policies and widely spread measures to increase awareness on the relevance of biodiversity and its preservation, as well as to reduce forms of pollution affecting its safeguard. Form of support: grants are the most suitable form of support in relation to the envisaged types of actions.</p>
Thematic Focus of the first call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Biodiversity protection and preservation, including protected areas and areas under Habitat and Birds Directives ○ Green and blue infrastructures, and ecosystem services ○ Sustainable soil, fishery, and aquaculture management
Indicative actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Define and implement policy frameworks, strategies and related implementation to protect and enhance natural terrestrial and sea habitats, including protected areas and areas under Habitat and Birds Directives ○ Test solutions to protect and restore flora and fauna (with particular attention to algae/poseidonia oceanica, large carnivores, pollinating insects, migrators, fishes), also envisaging the use of blue and green infrastructure. ○ Identify and transfer good practices and innovative solutions addressing the presence of alien marine species and the preservation of native flora and fauna in terrestrial environments. ○ Define action plans to reinforce the implementation of existing/new Integrated Coastal Zone Management, Maritime Spatial Planning and the MSFD (EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive) as well as the implementation of the UN Barcelona Convention, in particular with regard to the management and monitoring of marine protected areas. ○ Define and implement legally binding agreements with key actors to reduce plastic discharge into the sea. ○ In the framework of Maritime Spatial Planning, develop and implement joint strategies on Adriatic and Ionian seas to safeguard biodiversity also taking into account the conflicting sea exploitation: tourism, commercial and recreational shipping, aquaculture plants, settlements of offshore wind parks, oil and gas extraction etc.

Output Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	38

RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	38
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	114
RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	19

Result Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Target (2029)
RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	strategy/action plan	0	28
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	57
RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0	14

Expected Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting the frame for shared transnational and macro-regional actions by repositioning protection and preservation of nature in its central role; ○ Leverage for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level.
Target groups	Target groups comprise: Adriatic-Ionian population who will benefit from the implementation of the proposed activities, as well as public and private organizations benefiting from the leverage effect of the implemented actions, e.g.: national, regional and local public authorities, policy makers, research institutions, NGOs, non-profit organisations, associations, research organisations, universities, public service providers, education institutions and training centres, SMEs etc.

Priority Axis 2	
Supporting a greener and climate resilient Adriatic-Ionian region	
Specific Objective 2.8	
Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility, as part of transition to a net zero	
Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area	<p>Urban mobility in Adriatic-Ionian cities, as in many other European ones, is characterized by similar problems, such as traffic congestion and air pollution; in the same way, Adriatic-Ionian cities are also acknowledging innovation trends in mobility, such as infrastructure digitalization, and the diffusion of shared modes of transport (e.g. bike-sharing, car-sharing, car-pooling) as well as of (less pollutant) electric-vehicles. Innovation in infrastructure and services represents an opportunity to improve services and integration of public transport, to promote sustainable multimodal mobility in the IPA ADRION cities, as well as in other polycentric settlements, such as coastal areas during tourist season and in functional urban areas, i.e.: a densely populated city and a less densely populated commuting zone whose labour market is highly integrated with the city (OECD, 2012).</p> <p>To face the challenges of the transition towards zero-carbon transport emissions, a wide range of transnational mobility solutions and initiatives can be adopted to promote a modal shift towards public transport, as well as forms of active mobility (e.g.: cycling). Shared mobility should be perceived as part of a multimodal transport system with the preeminent role of enlarging the catchment area of mass rapid transit (e.g. railways, metro, tram systems) serving functional urban areas. By implementing the above solutions, public transport would become highly accessible, and not only in the city centres. Moreover, interchange points (i.e. stations) would serve as interfaces between long distance and local transport services, providing higher levels of accessibility also to regional and national businesses and to tourist destinations.</p> <p>This mobility scheme would ensure a relevant role to intelligent transport systems, on the one hand, by facilitating operators to create seamless interchanges from one type of transport mode to another, e.g. by synchronizing timetables at interchange nodes, by offering integrated fares for travellers using different modes (e.g. train and bus) and, on the other, by supplying new customized travel solutions and providing information on the different travel options available.</p> <p>Actions to promote integrated and multimodal mobility services should incorporate communities' real and perceived needs. To this aim, an active involvement of citizens and stakeholders is desirable, particularly directed to those travellers who could be shifted towards public transport and active mobility forms (e.g.: cycling) such as residents that do not own a private vehicle or "city users", tourists or visitors coming from outside the urban area (regional or national mobility).</p> <p>Another important step towards achieving sustainability in the region is the gradual transition to electro-mobility. In this respect, the Adriatic-Ionian region should identify the best path toward a fully electric urban mobility.</p>
Thematic Focus of the first call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intelligent transport system solutions for multi-modal urban mobility ○ Transition towards a zero-carbon urban private/public fleet ○ Mobility as a Service (MaaS)
Indicative actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elaborate joint actions to develop and implement intelligent transport system solutions devoted to a better infrastructure use and new mobility services to improve sustainable, clean and smart mobility systems and smart management of traffic flows for cities and functional urban areas. ○ Set in place joint actions aimed at promoting the active involvement of citizens, tourism actors and economic operators in the development of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) both in cities and in functional urban areas.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support the shift towards sustainable and accessible urban public transport and active modes (e.g.: cycling, walking) through the implementation of joint pilot actions, by also taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the electro-mobility revolution.
--	--

Output Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	14
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	42

Result Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Target (2029)
RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0	10
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	21

Expected Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Broader deployment and testing of novel solutions to promote multimodality. ○ Adoption of integrated travel solutions. ○ Increase of attractiveness of public transport for different segments of the population, in particularly for elderly people and citizens living in the cities 'peripheral areas and in functional urban areas. ○ Increased awareness and knowledge among cities' administrations on how to manage the transition towards the zero-carbon mobility target and which strategies should be adopted to contribute to the EU Green Deal goals. ○ Leverage for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level.
Target groups	Target groups comprise: inhabitants and bodies operating in the areas benefiting from the granted projects. They also include local, regional and national public authorities, policy makers, universities and training institutions, research institutions, tourist operators, transport operators and agencies, regional development agencies, associations, private enterprises including SMEs, NGOs and non- profit organizations.

Priority Axis 3	
Supporting a carbon neutral and better-connected Adriatic-Ionian region	
Specific Objective 3.2	
Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility	
Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area	<p>The position of the Adriatic-Ionian region is highly strategic in terms of transport and mobility for both people and goods. Nevertheless, it is still characterized by several territorial discontinuities that are direct consequence of its geomorphological structure and history and hamper the full exploitation of its socioeconomic and environmental potential.</p> <p>A central role in the region is undoubtedly played by its maritime dimension. In fact, the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, with more than 350 registered ports, could potentially constitute a relevant interconnection hub particularly for freight transport. Almost all the ports are located alongside regional multi-modal transport corridors (including the TEN-T Core Network Corridors) and, therefore, represent key nodes for the development of integrated maritime, rail and road connections. The lack of a reliable railways system in a large portion of the Adriatic-Ionian region hinders the creation of an integrated and resilient transport infrastructure. Multimodal transport is particularly limited, curbing the potential exchange of goods from the coast to the hinterland and vice-versa. Missing links in last mile connections between ports and intermodal terminals and along the network also affect the overall capacity of the transport system. In addition, transnational transport – both between Adriatic-Ionian countries and the neighbouring ones is further slowed down by lengthy customs clearance procedures at the borders.</p>
Thematic Focus of the first call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intermodal last mile connections ○ Alternative clean fuels supply facilities, particularly in sea ports ○ Intelligent transport system technologies/solutions for multimodal transport
Indicative actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Set in place transnational cooperation actions to develop and/or improve sustainable smart mobility systems to strengthen urban-rural linkages and implement innovative sustainable transport solutions, including forms of participatory governance to improve multimodal and low carbon mobility for passengers, tourists, and commuters of the Adriatic-Ionian region. ○ Support environmental performance and energy efficiency for low carbon port systems and related infrastructures – such as noise reduction, air quality, decrease of CO2 emissions - through the adoption of pilot actions testing innovative technologies, circular economy solutions, energy sustainability and harmonized regulatory standards for maritime/river transport.

Output Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	22
RCO84	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	18
RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	54
RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	9

RCO117	Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified	solutions	0	5
---------------	--	-----------	---	---

Result Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Target (2029)
RCR84	Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	organisations	0	27
RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	strategy/action plan	0	16
RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	solutions	0	7
RCR82	Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved	legal or administrative obstacles	0	3

Expected Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contribute to the identification of new, shared, environmentally sustainable multimodal transport solutions and to the reduction of distance gaps characterising some areas/destinations. ○ Encourage new transport concepts following the pandemic crisis. ○ Minimize legal or administrative obstacles currently slowing down transport procedures in particular in seaports. ○ Strengthen cooperation among ports for joint identification of solutions aimed at up-scaling in particular with regard to their environmental impact. ○ Increase awareness and knowledge among relevant organizations, in particular seaports, and to identify new strategies to contribute to the EU Green Deal goals. ○ Produce leverage for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level.
Target groups	The target groups comprise: passengers and tourists, as well as the institutions and organizations dealing with production, logistics and transport sectors. They involve the public sector including local, regional and national authorities, policy makers, research institutions, tourist operators, port authorities and logistic operators, regional development agencies, associations, NGOs, non-profit organizations, education and training organizations, SMEs.

Annex 2 - Overview on outputs and result indicators

The annex provides an overview of the IPA ADRION programme definitions, specifications and minimum requirements adopted on programme outputs and results.

The document is based on the Commission's staff working document *"Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund; Cohesion Fund and Just Transition Fund 2021-2027"* – SWD(2021) 198 final - 8.7.2021.

It also contains indications on the quantification and reporting of the indicators (outputs and results), along with the supporting documents required for their formalization. The minimum requirements have been set by the programme in order to ensure a streamlined approach among all funded projects.

The document is designed in order to support the applications and beneficiaries in defining properly their respective project outputs and results.

OUTPUT INDICATORS

RCO 83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed

Indicator code	RCO 83
Indicator name	Strategies and action plans jointly developed
Measurement Unit	strategy/action plan
Type of indicator	output
Definition	<p>The indicator counts the number of joint strategies or action plans developed by supported projects.</p> <p>A jointly developed strategy aims at establishing a targeted way to achieve a goal-oriented process in a specific domain. An action plan translates an existing jointly developed strategy into actions.</p> <p>Jointly developed strategy or action plan implies the involvement implies the involvement of the entire partnership participating countries in the drafting process of the strategy or action plan.</p>
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF
Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Only strategies and action plans jointly developed by the project can be counted under this indicator. ○ The implementation of previously developed strategies and action plans, along with their revisions or update must not be counted under this indicator, but within the indicator RCO 84. ○ In case one project develops one strategy and one action plan based on the strategy, the strategy and action plan developed within the project must be counted separately under this indicator. ○ Guidelines, policy recommendations, white papers or any other documents of strategic relevance should not be counted under this indicator, as they do not fall under the definition of the strategy /action plan. ○ Project management and communication strategy should not be counted under this indicator.
Minimum requirements of output formalization	<p>The strategy must reflect the territorial needs and ensure its sustainability. It must provide a common vision; overview of the state of play of the area; as well as a set of midterm and long-term goals and objectives, based on a SMART approach (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-based).</p> <p>The Action plan must indicate the necessary actions to be implemented in order to reach the envisaged objectives, along with the related timeline. It should be designed following an integrated approach ensuring the logic sequence of actions linked to the planned strategic goals, as well as all the necessary elements to ensure their achievement and the financial resources.</p>
Corresponding Result Indicator	RCR 79 "Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations"

RCO 84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects

Indicator code	RCO84
Indicator name	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects
Measurement Unit	Pilot action

Type of indicator	output
Definition	<p>The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or demonstration of practices. In order to be counted by this indicator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented within the project, and ○ the implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of the project. <p>Jointly developed pilot action must be developed and implemented in a transnational context.</p>
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF
Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pilot actions developed by organisations coming from only one partner State cannot be counted under this indicator; ○ Each pilot action should lead to at least one solution.
Minimum requirements of output formalization	<p>The document of formalization of the “pilot action” must contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The rationale of the pilot action, how it has been designed, including further identification of implemented tool(s); ○ The goal of the pilot action must be also supported by technical evidence and adequate provision of data and information. ○ The methodological approach highlighting elements of novelties, excluded and adopted approaches and reasons why; ○ Information on the way the pilot action has been implemented and its results, including the environmental impact; ○ Outcomes of pilot action/s and the project partners/institutions involved.
Corresponding Indicator	RCR 104 – Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations

RCO 116 - Jointly developed solutions

Indicator code	RCO116
Indicator name	Jointly developed solutions
Measurement Unit	Solutions
Type of indicator	Output
Definition	<p>The indicator counts the number of jointly developed solutions from joint pilot actions implemented by supported projects. To be counted in the indicator, an identified solution should include indications of the actions needed for it to be taken up or to be upscaled.</p> <p>A jointly developed solution implies the involvement of organizations from at least two participating countries in the drafting and design process of the solution.</p>
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF

Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Solutions developed under such indicator should not be focused on the legal and administrative frameworks; ○ This indicator counts only the solutions developed in the framework of the joint pilot actions; ○ Solutions developed by the organizations located only in one partner State cannot be counted under this indicator.
Minimum requirements of output formalization	The document of formalization must provide clear indication of the actions needed for it to be taken up or to be upscale .
Corresponding Result Indicator	RCR 104 – Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations

RCO 117 - Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified

Indicator code	RCO117
Indicator name	Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified
Measurement Unit	solutions
Type of indicator	output
Definition	<p>The indicator counts the number of solutions identified for resolving/ alleviating such legal or administrative obstacles across borders.</p> <p>Legal or administrative obstacles are identified on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the territorial context, which provides meaningful inputs on the functioning legal and administrative frameworks. The identified solution(s) should be customised according to the specificities of each territory and cooperation context.</p> <p>In order to be counted in the indicator, an identified solution should be accompanied by indications of possible actions to be taken for its potential implementation.</p>
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF
Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Solutions developed must be focused on the administrative and legal aspects; ○ Solutions must be developed jointly by the partnership coming from at least two partner States.
Minimum requirements of output formalization	The document formalizing the solution must contain the analysis of context; including the legal and administrative frameworks; suitability of the solution to the territorial specificities; advantages deriving from the introduction of the new solution , as well as all the necessary actions to be taken for its potential implementation .
Corresponding Indicator	RCR 82 “Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved”

RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders

Indicator code	RCO 87
Indicator name	Organisations cooperating across borders
Measurement Unit	Organisations
Type of indicator	Output
Definition	The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally in supported projects .

	The organisations counted in this indicator are the legal entities including project partners and associated organizations included in the project Application Form.
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF
Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Double counting must be avoided at project level. Therefore, only legal entities must be counted. ○ Different departments of one single institution can be counted separately only if they have an individual legal entity.
Minimum requirements of output formalization	n.a
Corresponding Result Indicator	RCR 84 "Organisations cooperating across borders after project lifetime"

RESULT INDICATORS

RCR 79 – Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations

Indicator code	RCR 79
Indicator name	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations
Measurement Unit	Joint strategy/action plan
Type of indicator	Result
Definition	The indicator counts the number of joint strategies and action plans (not individual actions) adopted and implemented by organisations during or immediately after the project completion . The organisations involved in take-up may or may not be direct participants in the supported project.
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon project finalization or submission of the last progress report (3 months after the project end date)
Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At the time of reporting this indicator, the implementation of the joint strategy or action plan need not to be completed but effectively started. ○ It is not necessary that all actions identified are taken-up for a strategy/action plan to be counted in this context. ○ The value reported should be equal to or less than the value for "RCO83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed".
Formalization	The uptake of the joint strategy and action plan must be documented by the adopting institutions (e.g. letters of commitment; institutional acts etc).
Corresponding Output Indicator	RCO 83 – Strategies and action plans jointly developed

RCR 82 - Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved

Indicator code	RCR 82
Indicator name	Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved
Measurement Unit	solutions

Type of indicator	result
Definition	Legal or administrative obstacles refer to rules, laws or administrative procedures which obstruct everyday life and the development of border regions. The indicator counts the number of legal or administrative obstacles that are alleviated or resolved based on solutions identified through supported projects.
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon project finalisation or submission of the last project report (3 months from the project end date)
Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The adoption and implementation of the respective solutions should take place during the implementation of the project or immediately after the project completion (within 3 months after the project end date).
Formalization	The adoption and implementation of the respective solutions must be documented by the adopted organizations through decisions, acts of the adopted organization; letters of commitment; etc
Corresponding Output Indicator	RCO 117 "Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified"

RCR 104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations

Indicator code	RCR 104
Indicator name	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations
Measurement Unit	Solution
Type of indicator	Result
Definition	The indicator counts the number of solutions , other than legal or administrative solutions, that are developed by supported projects and are taken up or upscaled during the implementation of the project or within three months from the project end date. The organisation adopting the solutions developed by the project may or may not be a participant in the project.
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon project finalisation or submission of the last project report (3 months from the project end date)
Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legal or administrative solutions must not be counted under this indicator, but on RCR 82; ○ The target value to be set in AF must be equal to or less than the value corresponding to the output indicator RCO 116 "Jointly developed solutions".
Formalization	The uptake / up-scaling should be documented by the adopting organisations in, for instance, strategies, action plans etc. In case the solution has been finalized at the end of the project and its uptake will happen at a latter stage, the project must provide a time plan for the uptake of the solution, along with a written commitment of the organizations to adopt it.
Corresponding Output Indicator	RCO 84 – Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in the projects RCO 116 – Jointly developed solutions

RCR 84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project lifetime

Indicator code	RCR 84
Indicator name	Organisations cooperating across borders after project lifetime
Measurement Unit	Organisations
Type of indicator	Result
Definition	<p>The indicator counts the organisations cooperating across borders after the completion of the supported projects.</p> <p>The organisations are legal entities involved in project implementation, as project partners and associated ones.</p>
Data Collection	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
Time of measurement	Upon project finalisation or submission of the last project report (3 months from the project end date)
Indications on counting and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The target value must be equal to or less than the value reported under the output indicator RCO 87.
Formalization	<p>The cooperation concept should be based on a formal agreement among the parties to continue cooperation, after the end of the project.</p> <p>The formal cooperation agreement must contain the goal of the cooperation, duties and responsibilities of the parties, the activities to be performed in cooperation and duration after the project end date.</p> <p>The document attesting the formal agreement among the parties (i.e. signed expression of interest; memorandum of understanding etc) must be provided during the implementation of the project or within 3 months from the project end date.</p>
Corresponding Output Indicator	RCO 87 "Organisations cooperating across borders"

Annex 3 - Admissibility and eligibility checks

Admissibility criteria

1	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Admissibility criteria	Admissibility questions	Y/N	Consequence on failure
1.1	Application Form	Use of on-line system JEMS	Has the Application Form been submitted through JEMS?		Rejection of the project proposal
1.2	Application Form and Declarations	Completeness of the submitted Application Form and Declarations	Have all the sections of the Application Form been filled in?		Rejection of the project proposal
			Has the Application Form been filled in English?		Rejection of the project proposal
			Has the Lead Partner Declaration been submitted through JEMS?		Rejection of the project proposal
			Have Project Partners' Declarations been submitted through JEMS?		a) Exclusion of the project partner b) Rejection of the project proposal if: 1) the exclusion of such partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.
			In case of involvement of Associated Partner(s), has (have) the Declaration(s) been submitted through JEMS?		Exclusion of the Associated partner(s)

		Has the Lead Partner declaration been fully filled in and in English using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)?		Rejection of the project proposal
		Has/have the Project Partners' Declarations been fully filled in and in English using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)?		a) Exclusion of the project partner b) Rejection of the project proposal if: 1) the exclusion of such partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.
		Is the Lead Partner Declaration signed by the legal representative or his/her authorised delegated person?		Rejection of the project proposal
		Is the Project/Associated partner Declaration signed by the legal representative or his/her authorised delegated person?		a) Exclusion of the project partner b) Rejection of the project proposal if: 1) the exclusion of such partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.

Eligibility criteria

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Y/N	Consequence on failure
---	---	----------------------	-----------------------	-----	------------------------

			Is the partnership composed of at least 3 project partners from 3 different ERDF participating countries and at least 3 project partners from 3 different IPA participating countries?		Rejection of the project proposal
			Is each participating country represented by a maximum of 2 project partners?		Rejection of the project proposal.
			Is the same institution acting as Lead Partner involved in maximum 2 project proposals per call in two different Priority Axes?		Rejection of the project proposal according to its time of submission.
			Is the same institution involved in maximum 3 project proposals per call?		<p>a) Exclusion of the project partner of those project proposals arrived after the third one where the same project partner is included</p> <p>b) Rejection of the project proposal if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the exclusion of such partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.
2.2	Application Form (section B) and declarations	The Lead Partner is eligible	Is the Lead Partner located (legal and operational seat) in one of the NUTS 2 region of an ERDF participating country or in an IPA participating country (exception: Italian Assimilated Partner) and be endowed with legal personality?		Rejection of the project proposal

			<p>Does the Lead Partner belong to one of the following categories as reported in the Application Manual?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public body (national, regional or local level), including their associations; 2. Body governed by public law, including their associations formed by one or several bodies governed by public law; 3. EGTC within the meaning provided by art. 23.6 of Interreg Regulation; 4. Public body or body governed by public law competent in its scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but located outside of it (Assimilated Partner - for Italian partners only); 5. International organization acting under the national law of one of the participating countries; 		Rejection of the project proposal
2.3	Application Form, (section B.2) and Declarations	Project financing partners are eligible	Is the Project Partner located (lead and operational seat) in one of the NUTS 2 region of an ERDF participating country or in an IPA participating country (exception: Italian Assimilated Partner) and is		<p>a) Exclusion of the project partner</p> <p>b) Rejection of the project proposal if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the exclusion of such partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.

			endowed with legal personality?		
			<p>Does the Project Partner belong to one of the following categories as reported in the Application Manual?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public body (national, regional or local level), including their associations; 2. Body governed by public law, including their associations formed by one or several bodies governed by public law; 3. EGTC within meaning provided by art. 23.6 of Interreg Regulation; 4. Public body or body governed by public law competent in its scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but located outside of it (Assimilated Partner - for Italian partners only); 5. International organization acting under the national law of one of the participating countries; 6. Private body, including private companies. 		<p>a) Exclusion of the project partner</p> <p>b) Rejection of the project proposal if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the exclusion of such partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.

	Application Form, (section B.2) and Declarations		Is the information provided in the Application Form and in the Declarations consistent with regard to the legal status?		Request for amending the wrong statement in case the project proposal is recommended for funding
			Is the Associated Partner (if present) located in the EU or in one of the participating countries of IPA ADRION?		Exclusion of the Associated Partner
2.4	Application Form, section C.7.5	Project Partners jointly cooperate	Do project partners cooperate in all the following compulsory ways: joint development, joint implementation and joint financing?		Rejection of the project proposal

Annex 4 - Quality assessment grid

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT		
Relevance		
Project relevance	Max 5 points	<p>Is the need for the proposed project well justified, reasonable and well explained: does the proposal address a common territorial challenge of the Programme or a joint territorial asset?</p> <p>Is the project proposal relevant in relation to the targeted programme specific objective and the expected result?</p>
Policy and territorial relevance, horizontal principles	Max 5 points	<p>Does the project proposal clearly contribute to the relevant policy framework at different levels?</p> <p>Does the project clearly and consistently contribute to specified EUSAIR macro-regional strategy objectives and actions?</p> <p>Is the proposal of relevance to the territory of the programme: will the programme area benefit?</p> <p>Is the project relevant for the territorial needs in IPA participating countries to ensure the transfer of knowledge and build capacity in the implementation of EU policies and practices?</p>
	Max 5 points	<p>How does the proposal contribute to the respect of horizontal principles?</p> <p>How does the project position itself with regard to the pre-defined environmental topics and the “do not significant harm” principle?</p>
Innovativeness and synergies	Max 5 points	<p>Does the proposal build on existing practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the proposal demonstrate new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries? - Does the proposal adapt and implement already developed solutions? - Does the proposal introduce a completely approach? <p>Is the proposal making use of synergies with other projects or initiatives?</p>
Intervention logic		
Intervention logic	Max 5 points	Is the proposal’s intervention logic (i.e., project specific objectives, outputs and expected results) clearly defined and consistent?
	Max 5 points	<p>Are project outputs and results that contribute to Programme indicators realistic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it possible to achieve them with the given resources – i.e., time, partners, budget -? - Is it possible to reach them with the chosen approach?

		- Are they realistic based on the quantification provided)?
	Max 5 points	Do the project main outputs clearly link to the programme output and results indicators? Do the project main outputs clearly link to programme specific objectives and the project specific objectives?
	Max 5 points	Does the project proposal clearly conceptualise the ownership/durability, long lasting effects and transferability of outputs and results? Is financial, institutional, political sustainability ensured?
Partnership		
Partnership composition and competencies	Max 5 points	Is the partnership composition, including Associated Partners, relevant and strategic for the proposed project? Is it balanced with respect to the participating countries, the addressed sectors and levels? Is it consistent in size and composition with the proposed activities?
	Max 5 points	Does the lead partner have sufficient experience in the thematic field concerned and is it competent enough having the capacity to manage a complex transnational cooperation project under ETC? Do all project partners have competence and proven experience, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the project (financial, human resources, etc.)?
Cooperation character		
Cooperation character	Max 5 points	Does the partnership reflect the transnational cooperation approach? Does the transnational co-operation have a significant added value for the partners and the territories involved?
	Max 5 points	Do all partners play a defined role in the partnership, in line with the compulsory and optional ways of co-operation described? Are tasks and roles for each project partner clearly defined? Is the distribution of tasks and responsibilities of project partners appropriate?
TOTAL	Max 60 points	
OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT		
Workplan		
Work plan	Max 5 points	Is the overall approach suitable to obtain the planned outputs and results?
	Max 5 points	Are the work plan and timing of activities, deliverables and outputs realistic, consistent and transparent? Are the proposed financial and human resources appropriate to implement the project?

	Max 5 points	Will the target groups, the partners, and the stakeholders benefit from the co-operation?
Management	Max 5 points	Does the management approach show good potential to secure a sound project management, coordination and risk mitigation? Is the proposed project management structure effective? Are the internal communication and management structures appropriate to ensure a smooth co-operation within the partnership? To which extent the need for engaging external expertise is justified (with specific reflection on partnership expertise)?
Communication		
Communication	Max 5 points	Are communication activities planned in the work plan and are they relevant for achieving communication objectives? Are the communication activities and deliverables appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders? Will the proposed communication activities lead to sufficient visibility of the project among relevant target groups and stakeholders?
	Max 5 points	Are the capitalization activities foreseen in the workplan? If, yes, are these activities ensuring that the project outputs and results are effectively disseminated and used?
Budget		
Project budget	Max 5 points	To which extent the presented budget is transparent and include sufficient details per partner and per cost category? Is the application of simplified cost options (SCOs) appropriate and in line with the programme rules?
	Max 5 points	To which extent resources planned by the project partners are adequate (in terms of quantity and quality) and reflects market prices?
	Max 5 points	To which extent project budget is proportionate to the proposed work plan and project outputs? Is distribution of budget per period in line with workplan?
	Max 5 points	Is the financial allocation per cost category in line with the programme rules? To which extent the budget allocated to staff and external expertise is in line with the project content and the costs are realistic? To which extent the budget allocated to pilot actions and equipment (if applicable) is realistic and in line with the project content?
TOTAL	Max 50 points	

Annex 5 - State Aid discipline in IPA ADRION

State Aid Concept

According to Article 107 (ex. Article 87) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, State Aid is defined as any aid granted by a Member State or through State resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods.

State Aid applies when all the following **five criteria are cumulatively met**:

1. The recipient of the aid is an “**undertaking**”, which carries out an **economic activity** in the context of the project;
2. The aid is granted by a EU Member State or through State resources ;
3. The aid confers an economic benefit or advantage to the recipient, which would have not otherwise obtained under normal market conditions;
4. The aid favours selectively certain undertakings or the production of certain goods;
5. The aid distorts or threatens to distort competition and trade within the European Union.

Undertakings are entities engaged in an economic activity, regardless of their legal status (they can be public bodies, charities, NGOs, associations, universities and private firms) and regardless of whether they aim to make a profit or not. The main element to be taken into account is the nature of the activities that the PP institution intends to implement through the public funding. The only relevant criterion is to decide whether the entity carries out an economic activity in the framework of the project.

Economic activity is broadly defined as offering goods and services on a given market. There is no comprehensive list of economic activities as the term is very broad. The most important element to be considered is whether the PP concerned carries out in the project activities that can be reasonably considered of economic nature or not. If the PP carries out non-economic activities in the project, the State aid rules do not apply, even though it carries out (i.e. outside the project) normally activities of economic nature. The contrary can also occur, resulting in a state-aid relevant activity.

State Aid application in IPA ADRION programme

To ensure equal treatment to the IPA ADRION programme beneficiaries, State Aid discipline applies to all beneficiaries independently from their location (EU or non-EU Partner States).

The public support provided to undertakings in the framework of IPA ADRION programme is **granted in the framework of de minimis regime**. This implies that undertakings can receive a public contribution from the IPA ADRION programme, only if they have not received in the framework of de minimis rule more than EUR 200.000,00 in Italy over a period of three fiscal years from the date of granting of the aid.

Specific de minimis thresholds apply for specific sectors:

- o EUR 100.000 for freight transport;
- o EUR 30.000 and national maximum cumulative amount for fishery and aquaculture sector;
- o EUR 15.000 for the agricultural sector.

Aid to **export-related activities and aid contingent** upon the use of domestic over imported goods **cannot be granted** under de minimis regulation. The IPA ADRION programme **does not support also “undertaking in difficulty”**.

For IPA ADRION, eventual EU contribution according to *de minimis* is granted by Italy; the amount in subject shall be cumulated only with others under *de minimis* granted in Italy.

De-minimis thresholds counts per “**single undertaking**”. In case a project partner is part of a group, the entire group is considered as a single undertaking and the de-minimis thresholds applies to entire group.

If necessary and when requested, the affected LPs/PPs – irrespective whether they are located - must provide relevant documentation attesting the received contribution under *de minimis* granted by Italy.

The MA shall inquire the Italian national register on *de minimis* and inform the LP on the outcomes of such investigation. Partners carrying out state aid relevant activities in the framework of the project might have a reduction of the INTERREG funds awarded, in order to ensure the respect of the de-minimis thresholds.

Applicants are invited to consult the relevant national authorities to obtain more specific information on rules and limitations concerning State Aid.

As indicated in the *Assessment of the received applications* of the present Manual, the submitted project proposals are subject of a “state aid assessment” focusing on the five criteria listed above, paying particular attention to the nature of activities the project partner/s (LP or any PP) intend to implement, as well as the eventual economic advantages that might be generated. The results of such process are eventually reflected in the Subsidy Contract of the project.

During the project implementation, the LPs/PPs, whose total or part of Interreg contribution has been granted under the *de minimis regime*, are required to declare in the submitted partner report the received aid contribution over the three fiscal years until the date of submission of the report.

Indirect State Aid granted to third parties outside the partnership

In some cases, projects foresee some activities devoted to third parties which are not project partners but benefit from the activities implemented (e.g.: training activities, consultancy, services; access to research facilities for companies, vouchers etc.). The project activities result offering advantages in favour of the “undertakings” outside the project partnership that would have not been received under normal market conditions. In such case, the aid is granted under GBER Article 20a²⁵, referring to exemption for aid limited amounts in the context of Interreg.

Aid granted under GBER Article 20a to an undertaking **cannot exceed EUR 20.000**. The amount to be granted to the single third party shall be approved by the MA/JS, before the related activities are implemented.

²⁵ Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No.651/2014, introduced by the amending Regulation (EU) No 2021/1237.