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**IPA** ADRION

# **INTERREG VI - B IPA ADRIATIC IONIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2021-2027**

**“IPA ADRION”  
CCI2021TC16IPTN001**

## **Application Manual**

**2nd call for proposals  
Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3**

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## Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>General Information on IPA ADRION Programme .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	Introduction.....	4
1.1	Legal and Strategic framework .....	5
1.2	IPA ADRION Programme in a nutshell .....	7
1.2.1	<i>Programme goal and strategy</i> .....	7
1.2.2	<i>Programme Priorities and Specific Objectives</i> .....	7
1.2.3	<i>Programme eligible area</i> .....	8
1.2.4	<i>Programme budget</i> .....	9
1.2.5	<i>Programme Intervention Logic</i> .....	10
1.2.6	<i>What the programme funds</i> .....	10
1.2.7	<i>Support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region</i> .....	11
1.2.8	<i>Horizontal principles</i> .....	12
1.2.9	<i>Synergies and complementarities with other programmes and initiatives</i> .....	13
1.2.10	<i>IPA ADRION programme governance and bodies</i> .....	14
1.2.11	<i>Programme language</i> .....	15
<b>2.</b>	<b>2nd call for proposals devoted to Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3.....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1	Opening of the call .....	16
2.2	Call Thematic Focus.....	16
2.3	Compulsory and optional activities to be included in the project proposal .....	18
A.	Capacity development (mandatory/compulsory) .....	19
B.	Activities aimed at strengthening the leverage effects of investments and policy developments (optional).....	21
2.4	Overall eligibility principles.....	21
2.5	Allocation of resources.....	21
2.6	EU projects financial size.....	22
2.7	Project duration.....	22
2.8	Eligible organizations and Partnership .....	22
2.8.1	<i>Eligible partners characteristics</i> .....	22
2.8.2	<i>Project partnership requirements</i> .....	23
2.8.3	<i>Financing partners main requirements</i> .....	25
2.8.4	<i>Partner Obligations</i> .....	27
2.9	Cooperation criteria .....	28
2.10	Location of the operation and related activities .....	29
2.11	Co-financing funding method.....	29
2.12	Project budget.....	30
2.13	Use of Euro .....	30
<b>3.</b>	<b>Hierarchy of rules on eligibility of expenditures .....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1	General eligibility provisions .....	31
3.2	Eligible expenditures /cost categories .....	34
3.2.1	<i>Staff costs</i> .....	34
3.2.2	<i>Office and administrative costs</i> .....	36
3.2.3	<i>Travel and accommodation costs</i> .....	37
3.2.4	<i>External expertise and services costs</i> .....	39
3.2.5	<i>Equipment costs</i> .....	41
3.2.6	<i>Other option for the use of simplified costs</i> .....	42
3.3	Project Intervention Logic.....	43
3.4	Project Output and Result indicators .....	44
<b>4.</b>	<b>Procedure for the submission and selection of the projects .....</b>	<b>50</b>
4.1	Application Package .....	50
4.2	Application Form .....	51
4.3	Submission of the applications .....	58
4.4	Assessment of the received applications .....	59
4.4.1	<i>Admissibility and eligibility checks</i> .....	59
4.4.2	<i>Quality checks</i> .....	60
4.4.3	<i>Anti-fraud checks</i> .....	61
4.4.4	<i>Verification on absence of double funding</i> .....	61
4.4.5	<i>State Aid Compliance checks</i> .....	62
4.4.6	<i>Absence on infringement procedures</i> .....	62

4.4.7	<i>Finalisation of the project assessment grid</i> .....	63
4.5	Decision making and communication to the Lead Applicants .....	63
4.6	Negotiation process .....	64
4.7	Contractual provisions .....	65
4.8	Project legal framework.....	65
4.9	Advanced Payment.....	66
4.10	Payment procedure .....	66
4.11	Publicity by the programme .....	66
4.12	Complaint procedure .....	66
4.13	Conflict of Interest .....	68
4.14	Monitoring of the performance and mid-term review .....	68
4.15	Programme support to potential beneficiaries .....	69
Annex 1- Overview IPA ADRION – Priority Axes; Specific Objectives and indicative actions to be granted under the 2nd restricted call for proposals .....		70
Annex 2 – Overview of outputs and result indicators .....		78
Annex 3 – Admissibility and eligibility grids .....		87
Annex 4 – Quality assessment grid .....		97
Annex 5 - State Aid discipline in IPA ADRION .....		101

## **1. 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 second 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.

## 1.1 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/delegated 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 the 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 the 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 the 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 agreement signed by Albania, the European Commission and the IPA ADRION Managing Authority (MA) on 28 March 2024
- Financing agreement signed by Bosnia Herzegovina, the European Commission and the IPA ADRION Managing Authority (MA) on 26 March 2024
- Financing agreement signed by North Macedonia, the European Commission and the IPA ADRION Managing Authority (MA) on 29 December 2023
- Financing agreement signed by Montenegro, the European Commission and the IPA ADRION Managing Authority (MA) on 17 October 2023
- Financing agreement signed by Serbia, the European Commission and the IPA ADRION Managing Authority (MA) on 6 November 2023.

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 Lead Partner (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.

All manuals, guidelines and any other documents relevant for project implementation (e.g., application manual, implementation manual) in their latest version, shall be delivered to the LPs during the project implementation and published on the website.

### **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
- Commission staff working document - Action Plan - Accompanying the document - 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 SWD (2020) 57 final
- Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social

EUSAIR flagships have been identified as solutions for the main challenges of macro-regional importance consistent with national needs as well as with the EU policy objectives for a greener; low-carbon and more connected Europe. Their content is available to project applicants to align better their project proposals with the EUSAIR objectives. Please follow the link: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/eusair-flagships-all-summed-up/>.

## **1.2 IPA ADRION Programme in a nutshell**

### ***1.2.1 Programme goal and strategy***

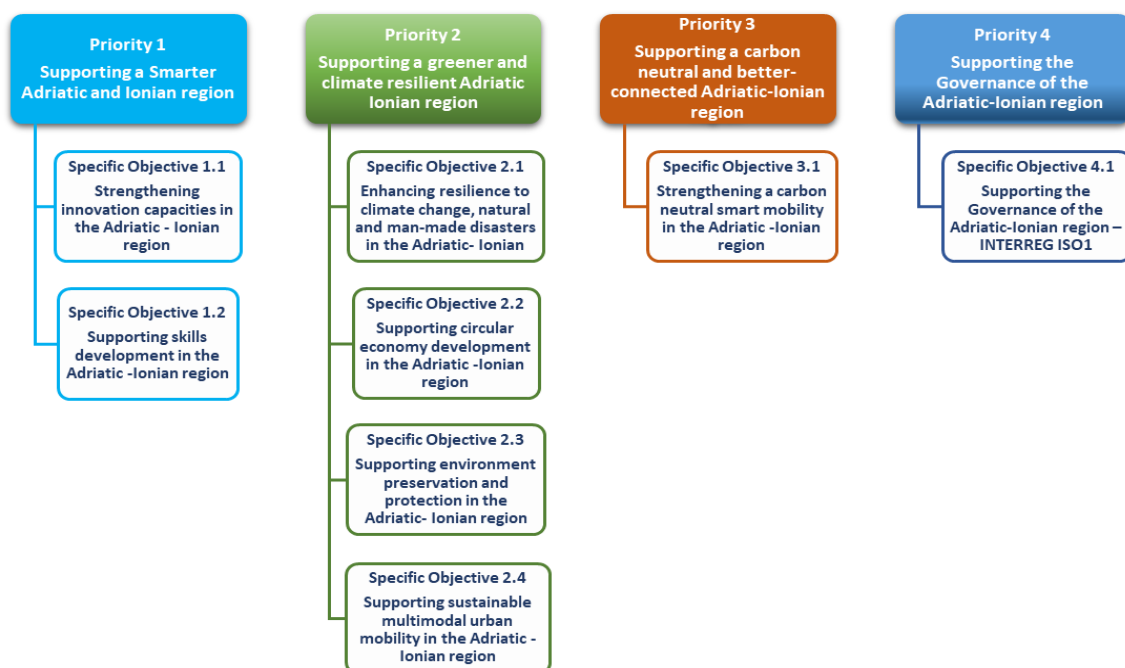
The IPA ADRION programme aims to contribute to the creation of a framework for enhanced cooperation and good relations between the participating countries, thus injecting dynamism in the enlargement process, reducing disparities and improving social cohesion, as well as supporting the implementation of the EUSAIR Strategy.

The programme aims to address the common Adriatic-Ionian region challenges such as biodiversity protection, climate changes and sustainable transport, through the implementation of innovative models and tools, acting as a key instrument for the identification of common solutions. This will contribute towards a smarter and greener Adriatic and Ionian region able to withstand future economic shocks.

### ***1.2.2 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).



### 1.2.3 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 partner States, 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 Partner State (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:

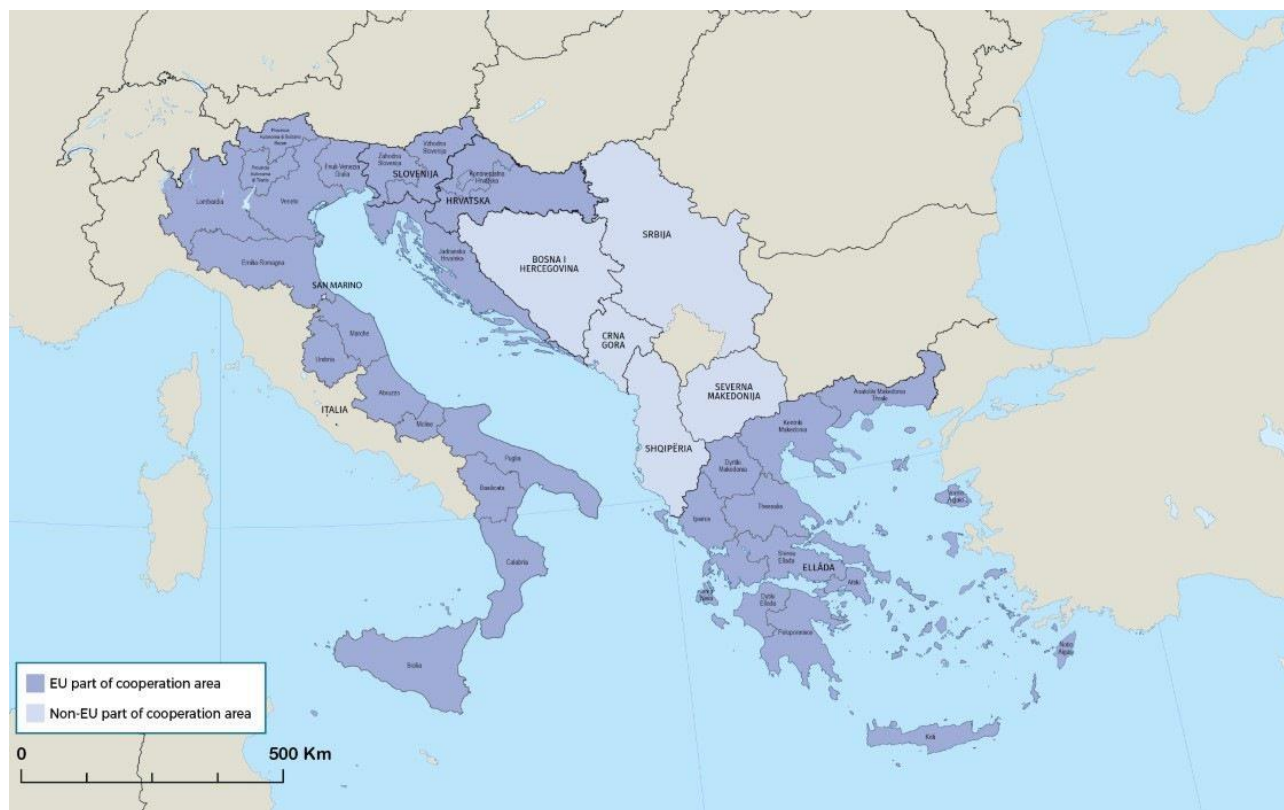
- Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- North Macedonia
- Montenegro



- Serbia

### Third Country:

- San Marino



### 1.2.4 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
<b>Priority Axis 1</b>	39.639.670,00	6.995.236,00	46.634.906,00
<b>Priority Axis 2</b>	73.811.797,00	13.025.612,00	86.837.409,00
<b>Priority Axis 3</b>	12.301.967,00	2.170.936,00	14.472.903,00
<b>Priority Axis 4</b>	10.935.081,00	1.929.721,00	12.864.802,00
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>136.688.515,00</b>	<b>24.121.505,00</b>	<b>160.810.020,00</b>

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

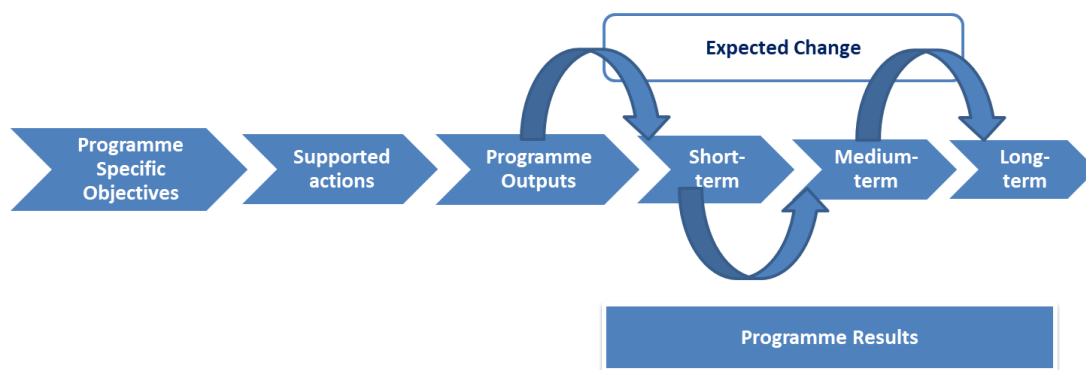
### 1.2.5 Programme Intervention Logic

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:

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

### 1.2.6 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.

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.

### ***1.2.7 Support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region***

The IPA ADRION programme strategy is strictly linked to the EUSAIR. The EUSAIR is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission and endorsed by the European Council in 2014<sup>1</sup>.

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 implementation<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Inforegio - EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (europa.eu)

<sup>2</sup> Please also check: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/about-eusair/>  
<https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/eusair-flagships-all-summed-up/>

### 1.2.8 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

In accordance with the *Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union*<sup>3</sup>, projects financed under the IPA ADRION Programme must respect the horizontal principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination (including on the grounds of national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation), and equality between women and men in the project design and implementation.

The Project Partners (PPs) must integrate the needs of persons with disabilities in the logic of the project intervention and consider the needs of these people at every stage of the project implementation.

#### 2) Equality between men and women

Granted projects will 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.

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

#### 3) Principle of sustainable development

Projects to be funded by the IPA ADRION programme must be in line with the EU objective of promoting sustainable development, as well as all related EU and national legislation, taking into account also the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement<sup>4</sup>.

Projects shall follow an “environmental sustainability by design” approach, meaning that environmental or wider sustainability considerations including human health effects will 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 choose to implement projects that do not adversely affect the quality of the environment; but rather prioritise the restoration of the environment and ecosystem functions and services, climate neutrality as well as the sustainable management and enhancement of cultural landscapes.

A new approach in the 2021–2027 programming period is the “do no significant harm” (DNSH) principle, which is treated as a part of the sustainable development principle and will be a subject to 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 causes significant harm if at least one of the aforementioned six situations is taking place.

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

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<sup>3</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (europa.eu)

<sup>4</sup> <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> e

The SEA screening analysis has shown that IPA ADRION does not cause significant damage to the environment and therefore complies with Article 9 of CPR and with art. 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852<sup>5</sup>. The Programme is therefore not expected to cause significant damage to the environment due to the nature of the envisaged actions: 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 significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

However, each project proposal must declare that it does not envisage actions that could cause serious damage to the environment. The Lead Partner (LP) will make such a statement in its declaration on behalf of the whole partnership. This statement and project content will be assessed against the DNSH principle (see Annex 6).

All granted projects by the IPA ADRION programme must integrate the horizontal principles throughout their design and implementation: the integration of the horizontal principles in the proposed activities shall be assessed, while during the project implementation the partnership will have to report on how they have been taken into account in the planned deliverables and implementation measures by providing evidence.

### ***1.2.9 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 can be found in the IPA ADRION programming document.

In particular, with regard to the expression of interest to be submitted in the framework of the SO 1.2, they shall aim at promoting synergies and complementarities with initiatives funded by IPA III, ERDF, ESF+, EAFRD, EMFAF, RFF and the national Recovery and Resilience Plans, and other EU instruments such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, Interregional Innovation Investments – I3, the Digital Education Action Plan and the Just Transition Fund (which partly focuses on skills development for vulnerable groups). The use of such complementarities, including with funds granted by other source of funding, e.g.: from the United Nations and the Western Balkans Investment Framework, should aim at the upscaling of results and leveraging of further funding and investments.

Additionally, synergies are also expected to take place with the selected topics of PO 1 i), PO 2 vi) of the present programme.

During the project development the granted partnerships should, where appropriate, 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 flagship new growth strategy to transform the EU economy into a sustainable economic model. It offers a transformative opportunity like no other in history: it is a commitment to transform Europe's economy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, delivering 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 EU Green Deal are:

#### **1. Climate action**

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

2. Clean energy
3. Sustainable industry
4. Buildings and renovations
5. Sustainable mobility
6. Eliminating pollution
7. Farm to Fork
8. Preserving biodiversity
9. Research and development
10. 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”, such as:

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

### ***1.2.10 IPA ADRION programme governance and bodies***

Several Programme bodies are responsible 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 for the management and implementation of the programme, including the implementation of the programme’s strategy and the planning of the calls for proposals. It ensures the effective interaction of the different programme bodies. It is assisted by the Joint Secretariat.

**The Monitoring Committee (MC)** is composed of national and regional representatives of the participating 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. It is assisted by the Joint Secretariat.

**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, together with the network of National Contact Points, is the main contact point for the potential applicants.

**National Contact Points (NCPs)** act as a link between the transnational and national levels. Each participating country appoints a Contact Point who acts as contact persons for project applicants and partners in their country, promotes the programme on the national territories, and support the Programme management.

**National Controllers** ensure that expenditure incurred by the PPs complies 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 of the management and control systems are carried out on an appropriate sample of operations and annual accounts. The AA is assisted by a Group of Auditors (GoA) composed of representatives from each IPA ADRION participating country.

Contact details of all programme bodies are available on the programme web site<sup>6</sup>.

### ***1.2.11 Programme language***

The official language of the IPA ADRION Programme is English. All documents, tools, and communication activities of the Programme management bodies will be in English; this language will also be used for all communication with the applicants and lead beneficiaries.

Potential beneficiaries can receive information in their national language by the relevant National Contact Points (NCPs), which can also translate the Programme documentation in their own language, if they consider it relevant.

However, only the English version of documentation and correspondence is binding.

All key deliverables produced by the projects will be in English.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/about-us/who-manages-the-programme/>



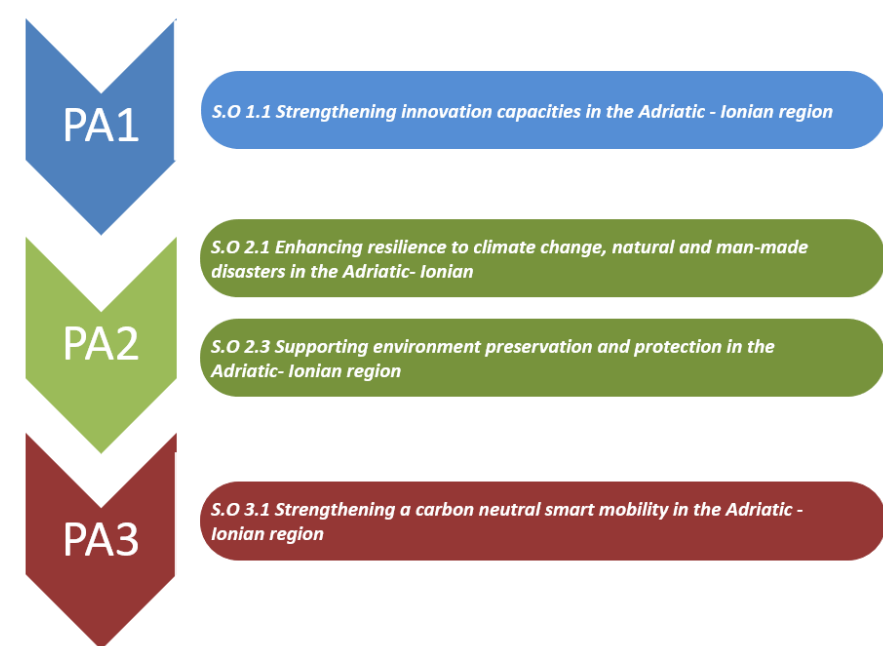
## 2. Second call for proposals devoted to Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3

### 2.1 Opening of the call

The opening of the call for proposals is scheduled on **15 April 2025**, while the deadline for submitting applications is **30 June 2025** at the latest by h. 13.00 (CEST/Rome time).

### 2.2 Call Thematic Focus

The call is addressed to the following priority axes, Specific Objectives (SO) 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)***

Only the following indicative actions are eligible under the present call:

Develop transnational Smart Specialization Strategies in the main areas of specialization of the Adriatic Ionian area (especially in the following main sectors: health and quality of life, agri-food and safe nutrition, sustainable tourism, and creative 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, processes, particularly in, but not limited to, the main fields of interest of S3 and social innovation (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 challenges like demographic change.



Promote the development of transnational partnerships, cluster-to-cluster cooperation, innovative networks, and similar initiatives.
Support digital divide reduction by addressing sustainable development, resilience to climate change, as well as addressing wellbeing - including health for the youth and elderly, hospital, and home care - and demographic trends
Develop and implement e-services such as: e-government, e-learning, or e-marketing or digital tools for industrial and creative production
Support the development of transnational and macro-regional clusters in the emerging sectors as creative and digital industries; medical devices, as well as sustainable tourism, etc (sectors as indicated in indicative action No.1)

## **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)***

Only the following indicative actions are eligible under the present call:

Develop, implement, and promote transnational climate change adaptation strategies, plans and test solutions with a focus on people's health, preservation of natural and cultural heritage and urban areas.
In the framework of Maritime Spatial Planning activities, develop transnational joint plans and pilot actions to boost resilience to climate change in marine ecosystems.
Design and implement strategies and action plans at local, regional and national level for the safeguard of water resources (rainwater management, river and lake water retention, water scarcity, drinking water, water availability, agricultural forecasting, breeding, industry and population).

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

Only the following indicative actions are eligible under the present call:

Collect compelling information and use it to develop advocacy material to strengthen synergies and increase preparedness among local/regional/national policy makers and administrators to set in place actions aimed at improving policy frameworks, governance and management schemes of existing or underway marine/natural protected areas.
Exchange of good practices and testing of solutions for sustainable tourism through participatory approaches and multi-level governance.
Identify and test joint action to ensure sustainable food and traditional agricultural products (e.g.: old seeds safeguard, traditional animal breeding etc.) to support the zero-km food chain, food safety and quality.
Contribute to the generation of positive impacts on the Adriatic-Ionian population's health through the identification of good practices and the implementation of pilot actions aimed at reducing air, water and soil pollution.
Define joint actions to enhance soil and water preservation by ensuring data collection and their public availability (e.g.: feeding EU networks like Data Network - EMODnet, agriculture data space)

## **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)***

Only the following indicative actions are eligible under the present call:

Develop and test innovative planning tools/solutions forecasting future demand for public transport in view of the impact caused by current socio-demographic changes and present pandemic situation on intermodal national, regional and local mobility.

Implement transnational integrated action plans supporting the development of rail-sea transportation intended as intermodal and multimodal transport mode.

Map infrastructural, technological, legislative gaps and barriers to freight circulation including the legal and administrative variances hampering the efficiency of smooth transnational transport, in order to create a common transnational transport policy framework

Improve accessibility within the Adriatic-Ionian region, with a focus on peripheral areas, to the TEN-T network through the implementation of action plans, tackling the bottlenecks hampering the transport's sector growth and economic development

**Projects funded under this call may address only one of the eligible Specific Objectives. Reference to the eligible indicative action(s) must be provided in the summary section of the Application Form.**

Details on the content of IPA ADRION Priority Axes, Specific Objectives and indicative actions to be granted under the 2nd restricted call for proposals are provided in Annex 1.

## **2.3 Compulsory and optional activities to be included in the project proposal**

The second call for proposals intends to valorize the leverage effect of the project proposals.

The leverage effect of cohesion policy is well known and has been widely discussed.

A definition of the leverage effect was provided already in 2007 by the Committee of Regions.

The Committee of Regions opinion<sup>7</sup> 2007/C 156/01 provides in its art.2 a definition of the leverage effect which has been used as source of inspiration for the elaboration of the present application manual. According to the Committee of Regions opinion, the leverage effect covers the following areas:

- 1) Financial aspects (the concentration of the funds in conjunction with a reasonable set of instruments, increase the chances of achieving the necessary critical mass, thus making possible the generation of further investment at a later date)
- 2) Strategic policy orientation (the role of cohesion policy to play in organizing regional and national priorities to create synergy at the European level)
- 3) Institutional capacity building (the way in which civil services operate, modernizing them, improving their management and harmonizing their procedures in the European context; it also includes the improvement of institutional capacity for designing and implementing public policies and extending the culture of evaluation, transparency and exchange of good practice)
- 4) Increasing cohesion in Europe (building a more cohesive Europe, as a result of different factors, like the principle of partnership, the identification of multidimensional solutions to highly complex and diverse problem, the creation of conditions for cooperation between EU regions and local authorities and for the development of new regional strategies, including the multiplier effect on European integration)

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<sup>7</sup> OJ C156/1 published on 7 July 2007.

When defining the content of the project proposal, and taking into account the eligible indicative actions as described in chapter 2, paragraph 2.2 and in the call announcement, the leverage effect of the project shall be demonstrated through:

- A. **COMPULSORY/MANDATORY ACTIVITIES:** capacity development
- B. **OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Activities aimed at strengthening the leverage effect on investment, and policy developments.

## **A. Capacity development (mandatory/compulsory)**

### **A.1 Rationale**

The call requires all project proposals to include dedicated capacity development activities in their work plan based on the definition provided by the Committee of Regions and OECD (ref to point 3 above).

Capacity development is a learning process through which an EU intervention interacts strengthening and valorising acquired knowledge and/or introducing new knowledge<sup>8</sup>.

According to OECD, while capacity building is “*The process by which individuals, groups and organizations, institutions and countries develop, enhance and organize their systems, resources and knowledge*”<sup>9</sup>, actual capacity development reflects individual and collective abilities, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve goals.

In other words, whereas the individual learning pathway refers to the individual's processes of acquiring knowledge and practices, ranging from university and college to past and present work experience, the organizational learning pathway is characterized by the pooling of knowledge of individuals, absorbing and integrating this knowledge in a way that contributes to its own identity.<sup>10</sup>

Another definition of capacity development has been provided in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness<sup>11</sup>, according to which capacity development is “*The capacity to plan, manage, implement, and account for results of policies and programmes, is critical for achieving development objectives – from analysis and dialogue through implementation, monitoring and evaluation*”.

Capacity development is mainly addressed to public institutions, but it can also be addressed to the non-governmental sector (e.g. civil society organizations, such as NGOs) or to the business one.

Even if capacity development has been primarily thought for the benefit of IPA partners and/or IPA project final beneficiaries, also partners and/or final beneficiaries located in lagging behind areas of the ERDF participating countries can benefit from the outcomes of these actions upon conditions that beneficiaries are clearly identified in advance and their lagging behind status is thoroughly explained.

Capacity development shall be considered as an activity aimed at further echoing the overall project goal and encouraging its understanding to a wide number of individuals, including the decision making levels of the institutions involved; capacity development supported by IPA ADRION intends to catch the *momentum* in view of future enlargement, as well as boosting cohesion regarding ERDF lagging behind partners/areas.

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<sup>8</sup> DG NEAR - Addressing capacity development in planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation. A Guidance note. December 2017, page 3.

<sup>9</sup> OECD-DAC definitions. DAC (Development Assistance Committee) definitions build on the UNDP's definition: “Capacity development [is] the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and countries develop their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives”. UNDP - Governance for sustainable human development - A UNDP policy document - Glossary of key terms – 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.undp.org/publications/paris-declaration-aid-effectiveness>

Finally, capacity development as such shall not be the focus of a project proposal: it must be one of the actions aimed at implementing the eligible indicative actions and supporting their effectiveness.

### ***A.2 Orientation for designing capacity development actions***

While designing the capacity development activities, the following elements must be considered:

- Capacity development is not only about training

Although training individuals, transferring capacity and developing more efficient systems is important, capacity depends more on improved institutional set-up and management that is able to ensure the integration (and internalization) of new abilities, skills and knowledge into everyday work.

- Capacity development is not *only* about individuals

Capacity development does not only address the strengthening of individual capacity, but also to the capacity of the institutions where individuals work, to transform the acquired skills into an overall institutional capacity.

- Performance (in producing pre-defined deliverables) is not capacity development

Support to change processes is the key to promote capacity, e.g.: engagement in resource mobilisation, motivation, uptake, ownership and accountability. Capacity development is not related to the production of pre-defined deliverables but is the result of a deep internal learning process.

### ***A.3 Institutional goals supported by capacity development***

Institutional capacity development can cover various aspects of an institution's mission, e.g.:

Policy initiative and development: Development of corresponding operational strategies to execute them and report on them (incl. identification of financial and managerial resources needed).

Performance-based planning: Set-up/mobilization of inputs and tools needed (incl. monitoring and evaluation arrangements, external resources capture) to achieve targets.

Coordination with others as part of a larger network: Ensuring recognition of the other institutions' role. Capture the interest and commitment of other stakeholders.

Adaptation to shifting needs and environment.

Linking the strategic and operational levels.

### ***A.4 Transnational context***

Given the transnational context in which the IPA-ADRION programme operates, the participants in the 2<sup>nd</sup> call for proposals must ensure that the planned capacity development activities of their project proposals are:

- a) Jointly developed and implemented at transnational level and tailored according to the needs of the specific territories and target groups.
- b) Supporting measure for the exploitation of project outputs and results. They must contribute to improving the understanding, knowledge, skills, competences and access to information of targeted stakeholders.

Capacity development activities are compulsory and must be described in section C.2.7 of the AF and the most appropriate Work Package(s). Dedicated quality assessment criterion/a shall appraise their effectiveness in relation to the project activities where they are framed.

The type of activities to be included in the workplan are the ones reported in chapter 4, par. 4.2.

## **B. Activities aimed at strengthening the leverage effects of investments and policy developments (optional)**

The leverage effect of IPA ADRION can be expressed through the enhancement of the bottom-up process leading to the creation of synergies generation of possible future investments at macro-territorial level (ref to points 1, 2 and 4 of the Committee of Regions definition).

IPA ADRION leverage effect is intended as the transnational continuation (follow up) of pathway already initiated individually by the partners at local/regional/national level. Such path must be based on investments supported by funds such as mainstream, national, NRRP - National Recovery and Resilient Plan – attesting the strong interest of the actors in improving their situation following pre-identified needs.

In this context, the transnational IPA ADRION project proposal must demonstrate the upgrade of the initiated path at local level through concrete activities which should bring to dedicated deliverables, in order to broaden the impact within the programme area.

The project proposal must not, therefore, be an expression of future intentions, but must be firmly anchored in the existing local reality and realistically linked to ongoing or finalized investment.

The partnership is required to describe the investment and how it will be upgraded within the project proposal, i.e.:

- a) Description of the ongoing/finalized investment and the related funded sources (e.g. mainstream, national, NRRP or other)
- b) Description of the need to upgrade the ongoing /finalized investment
- c) Description of how the leverage effect is embedded in the workplan. (section C.2.7 and the dedicated activity).

The leverage effect strengthening is an **optional project activity** to be included in the most appropriate Work Package(s).

As an optional project activity, it will not contribute to the strategic qualitative assessment, but it may increase the project's overall final score by a maximum of 3 points, provided that the project is assessed positively from a strategic point of view.

## **2.4 Overall eligibility principles**

Overall, the following requirements must be met by the proposed activities framed in the project proposal:

- They are for the benefit of the regions of the programme area
- They are essential for the implementation of the project
- They are explicitly described in the application form and have contributed to the achievement of the planned outputs and results. If they are not included in the application form, they have been previously approved by the MA/JS
- No double funding.

IPA ADRION shall not support activities falling under art. 7 of ERDF Regulation (i.e.: Exclusion from the scope of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund).

## **2.5 Allocation of resources**

The overall amount of Interreg funds allocated to the second call for proposals is around **MEUR 21,87**, indicatively allocated per Priority Axes and Specific Objectives according to the following:

Priority Axis	Specific Objective	EU allocation – INTERREG funds
<b>PA1</b>	SO1.1 - Strengthening innovation capacities in the Adriatic - Ionian region (ref. to SO 1.1 ERDF Regulation)	4.804.638,05
<b>PA2</b>	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)	7.220.267,58
	Specific Objective 2.3 - Supporting environment preservation and protection in the Adriatic Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.7 ERDF Regulation)	6.180.167,82
<b>PA3</b>	Specific Objective 3.1 - Strengthening a carbon neutral smart mobility in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 3.2 ERDF Regulation)	3.664.291,40
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21.869.364,85</b>

The Monitoring Committee (hereinafter: MC) of the IPA ADRION programme reserves the right not to commit to all available resources, depending on the quality of submitted applications.

## 2.6 EU projects financial size

The EU project budget must be up to **EUR 1.200.000,00** Interreg funds.

The IPA ADRION EU contribution will be limited to a co-financing rate of **up to 85%** of the eligible costs for all financing PPs. The share of expenditure (at least 15%) not covered by Interreg funds shall be ensured by national co-financing sources. Applicants can refer to their National Contact Points for an overview of the national co-finance systems.

The proposed project budget must be based 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.

## 2.7 Project duration

Project proposals expected to be granted under this call for proposals shall not exceed the duration of **36 months**.

Approved operations will be required to indicate the starting date before the signature of the subsidy contract.

## 2.8 Eligible organizations and Partnership

### 2.8.1 Eligible partners characteristics



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):

- **Be 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 association which shall demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of a participating country in the programme. In this respect, any legal entity whose statute was 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 in 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 listed under the sub-section “*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 level**, and associations formed by one or several of such public bodies
- **European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)**<sup>12</sup>, 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**, i.e., bodies having all of the following characteristics:
  - They are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character
  - They have legal personality; and
  - 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.

### **2.8.2 Project partnership requirements**

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

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

To ensure a fair participation of IPA ADRION territory, and to further disseminate the projects' outcomes, the minimum eligible partnership must have the following characteristics:

1. **At least 4 financing project partners, out of which 2 from different IPA participating countries and 2 from different ERDF participating countries.**
2. **Partners from San Marino do not contribute to the eligibility of the partnership**
3. The partnership may include up to a **maximum of 2 financing project partners from the same participating country**
4. The same organization may not be involved in more than **2 project proposals, out of which only in one as Lead Partner.**

If a breach of the above requirements No. 4 is found, the eligibility of the project partner – if all other requirements are met - will be determined by the time of arrival (i.e.: submission to the JEMS system) of the project proposal.

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.

The accuracy of the data will be checked by the National Contact Points, which will be the responsible for verifying the legal status of the partners and compliance with the participation limits set by the call.

Beneficiaries that have a European Participant Identification Code (PIC) are requested to indicate it in the dedicated box. In case of project approval and financing, PIC may be requested by the programme authorities<sup>13</sup>.

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

### ***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***

Financing project partners can be:

- Public bodies, including their associations
- Bodies governed by public law and their associations, including EGTC, governed by public law

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<sup>13</sup> <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/funding-tenders-opportunities/display/OM/Registration+and+validation+of+your+organisation>



- 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 applicable 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 organisation located outside the Programme area must be duly justified in the project application and further assessed with the assistance of the Italian NCP.

### ***Associated partners***

IPA ADRION Programme foresees the involvement of *Associated partners*, i.e.: those organisations willing to be involved in a project with an observer or associated status without financially contributing to the project. The associated organizations do not contribute to the minimum eligible partnership requirement; all expenditure incurred by these organizations shall be ultimately borne by one of the organizations acting as financing partners in order to be considered as eligible. The associated organizations may 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. The strategic involvement of these organisations and their positive contribution to the project, also during its follow up, must be described in the relevant sections of the Application Form.

Expenditure incurred by this body shall be limited to reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs related to its 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 through their own resources. They must ensure their contribution to the achievement of project outputs and results.

### ***2.8.3 Financing partners main requirements***

Financing partners must ensure that:

- a) They have adequate human and technical resources to ensure a sound project implementation and management
- b) Their administrative involvement in the project does not undermine their daily activities
- c) Their financial commitment within the project is adequate to their size and capacity

- d) They have the 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.

The LP and PPs shall declare in their declarations, that they are not in any of the situations listed in art. 136 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046:

1. Bankrupt, insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under Union or national law
2. 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
3. Grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards to which the entity belongs; wrongful conduct denoting negligence or intent
4. Fraud and corruption confirmed by a final judgement or a final administrative decision
5. Criminal conduct
6. 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
7. 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
8. 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.

In case one of the potential beneficiaries, in addition to the cases reported above<sup>14</sup>:

- has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information
- was 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 the award procedure.

Similarly, potential beneficiaries considered as undertaking in difficulty, as defined in point (18) of Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014<sup>15</sup>, unless authorised under *de minimis* aid or temporary

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<sup>14</sup> Ref. to art. 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046.

<sup>15</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0651&from=EN>

State aid rules established to address exceptional circumstances shall not be granted in accordance with art. 7 of ERDF Regulation.

In addition, the LP shall also declare in its declaration, that the information provided in the application form, is true and correct, as well as that the submitted project proposal respects the “Do not harm principle” as indicated in art. 17 of the Regulation (EU) 2020/852.

The Lead Partner is required to pay attention and check with the project partners, their compliance with “reputational conditions” relating to past or present participation in other Interreg programmes (i.e.: failure to reimburse another partner or the Managing Authority of another Interreg Programme). Checks on this regard will be performed by MA/JS during the negotiation process and might result to the exclusion of the affected partner and the eventual ineligibility of the project.

#### **2.8.4 Partner 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 LP 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 for these two legal documents are part of the application package.

**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:

- 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 to it
- Sign the subsidy contract with the MA on behalf of the entire partnership
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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
- Ensure that the promised outputs as in the approved application are delivered in accordance with the set timeline

- 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 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
- 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))
- Ensure that all project documentation (e.g.: progress report etc.) is kept available for a period of a 5 years from 31 December of the year in which the last payment is made by the MA to the beneficiary, without prejudice to the State Aid rules
- Coordinate the communication flow towards the MA/JS with regard to the timely submission of the progress reports and requests for reimbursement
- Be responsible for 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
- 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:

- Sign the Partnership Agreement
- 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
- Assume responsibility towards the LP of the repayment of any undue amount received in case of irregularities in the declared expenditure
- Ensure the quality implementation of all the activities under its responsibility within the set timeframe
- Maintain regular contact with the LP and inform of any difficulties encountered during the project implementation
- Provide the LP with the relevant information, data and material to be included in the progress reports
- Provide the LP with all financial data necessary for the preparation of the request for reimbursement to be sent to the JS; Ensure that all project documentation (e.g.: progress report etc.) shall be kept available for a period of a 5 years from 31 December of the year in which the last payment by the MA to the beneficiary, without prejudice to the State aid rules.

## **2.9 Cooperation 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)	Joint implementation (compulsory)	Joint financing (compulsory)	Joint staffing (optional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All project partners must 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 implemented by all the partners reducing <i>de facto</i> cooperation should be avoided).</li> <li>• All project partners shall define how they intend to work together, including the distribution of tasks.</li> <li>• Planned activities shall be coordinated by the Lead Partner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project activities must be implemented based on 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.</li> <li>• Coordination role of the project ensured by the Lead Partner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since the project budget is the sum of each project partner allocation, it must mirror the activities to be performed by each partner;</li> <li>• Each partner must 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.</li> <li>• Administrative and financial obligations shall be ruled in the Partnership Agreement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project partners must not duplicate functions within the partnership, in particular with regard to the project management functions that must be handled by the Lead Partner (i.e.: the project must have only 1 project coordinator; 1 joint financial manager etc, who keeps regular contacts with the partners from the fulfilment of their tasks).</li> </ul>

**The existence of the first three dimensions of co-operation will be considered as a condition for the eligibility of the project proposals.** The ways of cooperation and their actual design in the project proposal must also be reflected in the work packages and assessed from a qualitative point of view.

## 2.10 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 PPs, 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 benefit it (e.g.: meetings and events organized by European institutions in Brussels; participation to thematic events etc.). These activities must be:

- Clearly indicated in the AF, or
- If they are not explicitly foreseen in the AF,
  - ✓ they are clearly linked to the outputs and results of the projects, and duly justified in the reports, or
  - ✓ they are previously authorised by MA/JS.

## 2.11 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.:

- **Public funding:** public co-financing provided by central, regional or local public organizations, 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
- **Private funding:** refers to the amount of own funds provided by private organizations 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 should contact their national NCPs for an overview of the national co-finance systems.

## 2.12 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 life of the project.

The budget of the project must be drafted following the real cost principle<sup>16</sup>, 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.

The EU grant has not the purpose and shall not have the effect of producing a profit for the beneficiaries.

## 2.13 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.

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<sup>16</sup> Except for preparation costs and when simplified cost options (flat rate, lump sums) are used for calculating costs.



### 3. Hierarchy of rules on eligibility of expenditures

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 provisions and documents referred to in the present manual apply both to ERDF and IPA partners<sup>17</sup>.

Where different rules apply to ERDF and IPA beneficiaries, this is explicitly indicated in the related paragraphs and sub-paragraphs.

#### 3.1 General eligibility provisions

##### *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 approved 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 14.200,00 (EU and national contribution), on condition they have been included in the Application Form. If a single beneficiary receives any public subsidy for project preparation or application (e.g., seed money) this amount shall be deducted from the lump sum for project preparation. 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 documentation for the preparation costs, which will be included and verified by controllers with 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. Projects' expenditure must be paid out at the latest sixty days following the project end date.

In any case, the project expenditure must be incurred and paid within the programme eligibility period; therefore, by 31 December 2029.

- It relates to costs incurred and paid for the implementation of the project and in accordance

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<sup>17</sup> 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>.

with the AF approved by the MC or any subsequent approved revisions

- It is essential to the implementation of the project, and it would not be incurred if the project were not carried out
- It relates to a product or service provided for 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/the financing agreement (for IPA partners), 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<sup>18</sup>
- Fees or sub-contracting between partners (including associated partners) of a same project for services, equipment, carried out within the project
- 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

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<sup>18</sup> Exceptions are reported in chapter 3.2.5 – Equipment costs.



guarantee a coordinated visibility. A personalized project web site, other than the pages hosted at the programme web site, is eligible only if explicitly mentioned in the approved AF and duly justified

- Heavy investments, infrastructures and works
- Orchestras and shows unless clearly described in the AF and further approved.

### 3.2 Eligible expenditures /cost categories

Project budget must be disentangled according to the following cost categories:



#### 3.2.1 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/contracted<sup>19</sup> 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) gross employment costs 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 the gross employment costs 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 Council<sup>20</sup>, 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.

<sup>19</sup> Contracted or employed, depending on the national labour legislation.

<sup>20</sup> Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems.

Payments to natural persons working for the beneficiary under a contract other than an employment/work contract may be assimilated to gross employment costs and such costs are eligible under staff costs only when the following conditions are met:

- The person works under the beneficiary's supervision and monitoring 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 foreseen for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

Please note that this applies to partners from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, and North Macedonia<sup>21</sup>. The conditions under which a natural person can work under such a contract must be clarified by the LP/PPs to their controllers through the provision of relevant information with regard to the national law and their institutional regulations in force.

IPA ADRION does not provide a generally applicable definition of the term "working contract", as national regulations might be different from country to country.

If those conditions are not met, this expenditure must be allocated under the cost category of external expertise and services costs.

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 document 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 costs is eligible.
2. **Part-time with a fixed percentage of time worked per month:** an employee who devotes a fixed percentage of his/her working time to the project. This percentage is set out in a document issued by the LP or partner at the beginning of the project, and/or in the same employment document. The fixed percentage may be modified according to the dynamics of the activities and/or in duly justified cases, but not within the same reporting period. No recording of the working time (e.g., time sheets) is required. In such cases the **fixed percentage of the gross employment cost is eligible.**

**If option B) (Flat rate of 20% of the direct costs other than staff)** is chosen, beneficiaries (LP and PP) 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, a list of staff members working on the project and any other employment document shall be provided to the controller upon request. Moreover, each LP and/or PP using this option has to demonstrate that at least one employee is involved in the project activities.

In case the flat rate method is applied, the flat rate covers all items under letters a) and b) mentioned under the real costs option.

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<sup>21</sup> Please note that the paragraph does not apply to partners from Slovenia, Croatia, and Albania.

**Example for the calculation of 20% flat rate:**

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

*External expertise and service costs: EUR 50.000*

*Equipment costs: EUR 30.000*

Total: EUR 80.000

**Eligible Staff costs (flat rate 20%) = EUR 80.000 X 20% = EUR 16.000**

**3.2.2 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 LP and 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**

### **3.2.3 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 ceilings<sup>22</sup>. 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 and 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. However, beneficiaries are required to provide evidence of at least one trip in the project's lifetime through either an order to take a trip or a report or a record of a meeting or similar evidence.

The flat rate defined in the approved AF shall be automatically applied by the given PP(s) 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.

### **Example for the calculation:**

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

<sup>22</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/unit-cost-decision-travel\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/unit-cost-decision-travel_en.pdf)

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 Staff costs are also calculated as flat rate, Travel and Accommodation costs cannot be included on the basis for staff costs calculation.

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

### **3.2.4 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 organization or a natural person, other than the LP, PPs and APs:

- 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<sup>23</sup>

m) Omissis<sup>24</sup>

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.

Any costs for promotional material (e.g.: leaflets, brochures, gadgets) must be charged to this budget line and will only be considered eligible if its effectiveness in reaching one or more target groups can be demonstrated. External expertise and services have to be duly specified in the 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 LP/PP.

This cost category should also include travel and accommodation costs of staff for Associated Partners as well as of external speakers and external participants in project meetings and events incurred and paid for those LP/PPs which have agreed in the AF to cover these costs. Such costs must comply with all provisions on eligibility applicable to the travel and accommodation budget line and LP/PPs internal rules. Travel tickets may be purchased by the Associated PP and further reimbursed by the supporting 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 cost basis without any profit margin
- 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 should award 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 and – for IPA partners – the Financing Agreements signed by the participating countries with the EC and the MA are respected, in accordance with the amount

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<sup>23</sup> The content of this point is not relevant for beneficiaries.

<sup>24</sup> The content of this point is not relevant for beneficiaries.



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 thresholds<sup>25</sup>.

Beneficiaries shall respect relevant public procurement rules in force.

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

**According to the Financing Agreements signed with IPA countries, VAT contributes to definition of the procurement threshold.**

### ***3.2.5 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.

The costs of purchasing second-hand equipment are eligible only if respect the following conditions are met:

- (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.

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.

As a general principle the full cost of the equipment will be eligible. For equipment rented or leased

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<sup>25</sup> (<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/>)

for certain periods during the project's lifetime, rental or leasing costs for the respective period are eligible.

In case equipment was purchased before the project's start date and it is not fully depreciated before and used for the project, only the depreciation for the relevant project period is eligible.

### ***Costs for infrastructure and works***

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

### ***3.2.6 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 cost category: Office and administrative costs, Travel and Accommodation, External expertise and services and Equipment costs.

According to the aforementioned article *"A flat rate of up to 40 % of eligible direct staff costs may be used in order to cover the remaining eligible costs of an operation. The Member State shall not be required to perform a calculation to determine the applicable rate"*.

If a LP/PP chooses this method, direct staff costs (calculated on a real basis only) will be the category of eligible costs to which the 40% rate will be applied in order to calculate the remaining eligible costs of a partner's budget.

All remaining costs of the LP/PP's will be calculated as 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 planned expenditure must be detailed and indicate the number of units and their cost. Lack of this information will affect the quality assessment of the project proposal.**

**In case of use of 40% of Staff costs ex art. 56.1 of CPR, the programme recommends to clearly demonstrate what is planned to be covered i.e.: which activities are planned and their approximate costs.**

### 3.3 Project Intervention Logic

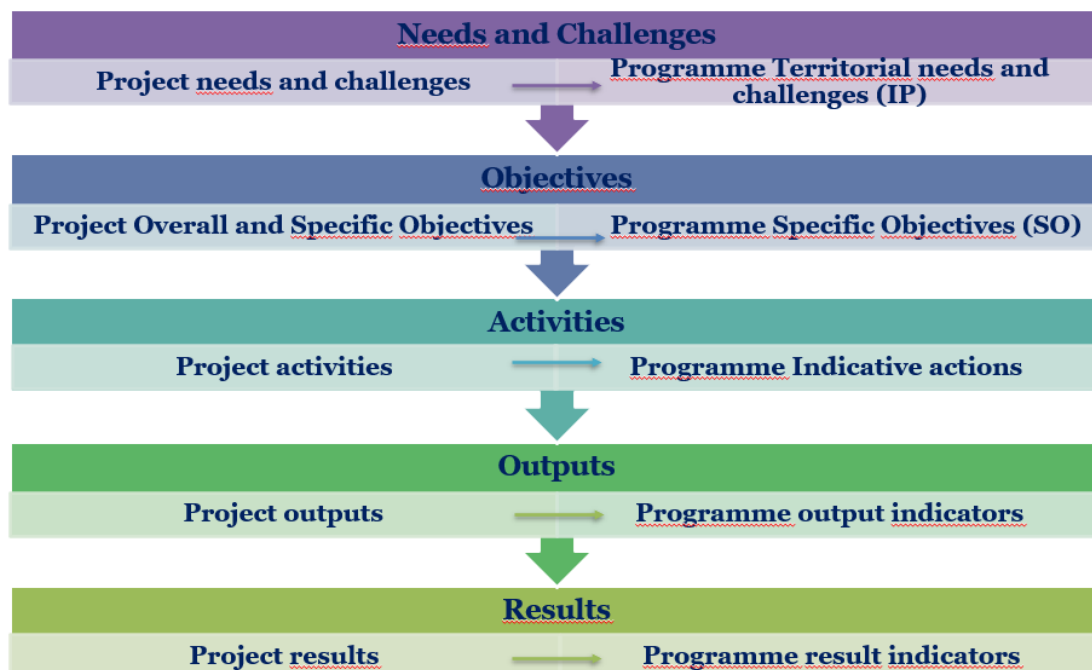
Projects funded by the IPA ADRION programme are required to follow the same **result-oriented approach** adopted by the programme, clearly identifying the results and the changes they are striving for, linking them to the identified territorial challenges and needs.

**The project intervention logic must mirror the programme intervention logic. This is a precondition for funding under the IPA ADRION programme.**

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

- The **project overall objective** 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** 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 the 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 benefits of using the project main outputs. They **must be captured by the programme result indicators.**

Links between the project and programme level and the intervention logic are described in the picture below:



**Each project must contribute to at least two Programme output and two result indicators.**

Projects must ensure that outputs and results achieved are durable even after the project closure. Therefore, projects are required to foresee follow up activities funded through other initiative or funds sources, in order to ensure the **sustainability of the project outputs and results**.

In this regard, specific conditions apply to the projects funded in the framework of the present call (see paragraph ***Durability of operations***).

### 3.4 Project Output and Result indicators

As reported in the paragraph ***What the Programme funds***, the IPA ADRION programme shall support the implementation of activities that can be grouped into 4 main output categories, out of which 3 are applicable to the present call, respectively:

- **Policy instruments**
- **Pilot actions and joint solutions**
- **Cooperation framework.**

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

It will be up to the partnership to identify the most suitable actions to reach the envisaged targets, taking into account the identified needs, state of the art, the 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 to establish a targeted process to achieve goals in a specific area. It is an integrated framework endorsed by the partnership to address challenges in a defined geographical area. The strategy must aim for policy integration in selected thematic areas and act as a policy driver beyond the national level, reflecting the territorial needs and ensuring sustainability. A common vision is needed, along with an overview of the area's current situation and medium and long-term SMART objectives (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. This output indicator applies only in the Specific Objective 3.1.

**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
<p><b>RCO 83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed</b></p> <p>The indicator counts the <b>number of joint strategies or action plans developed</b> 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 <b>implies the involvement of the entire partnership participating countries</b> in the drafting process of the strategy or action plan.</p>	<p><b>RCR 79 - Joint Strategies and action plans taken up by the organizations</b></p> <p>The indicator counts the <b>number of joint strategies and action plans</b> (not individual actions) <b>adopted by organisations during or immediately after the project completion</b> (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><b>The uptake of the joint strategy and action plan must be documented by the adopting institutions</b> (e.g. letters of commitment; institutional acts etc).</p>

<p><b>RCO 117 - Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified</b></p> <p>The indicator counts the <b>number of solutions identified for resolving/alleviating such legal or administrative obstacles across borders</b>.</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 <b>identified solution(s) should be customised according to the specificities of each territory and cooperation context</b>.</p> <p>The <b>development of solutions</b> implies the involvement of partners <b>from at least 2 partner States</b>. In order to be counted in the indicator, an identified <b>solution should be accompanied by indications of possible actions to be taken for its potential implementation</b>.</p>	<p><b>RCR 82 - Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved</b></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 <b>counts the number of legal or administrative obstacles that are alleviated or resolved based on solutions identified</b> through supported projects.</p> <p>The <b>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)</b>.</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>
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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.**

**Pilot actions and joint innovative solutions are interlinked (i.e.: the joint innovative solutions are a consequence of the implementation of the pilot actions). Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations are the consequence of the implemented innovative solutions.**

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

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



## 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 is 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.

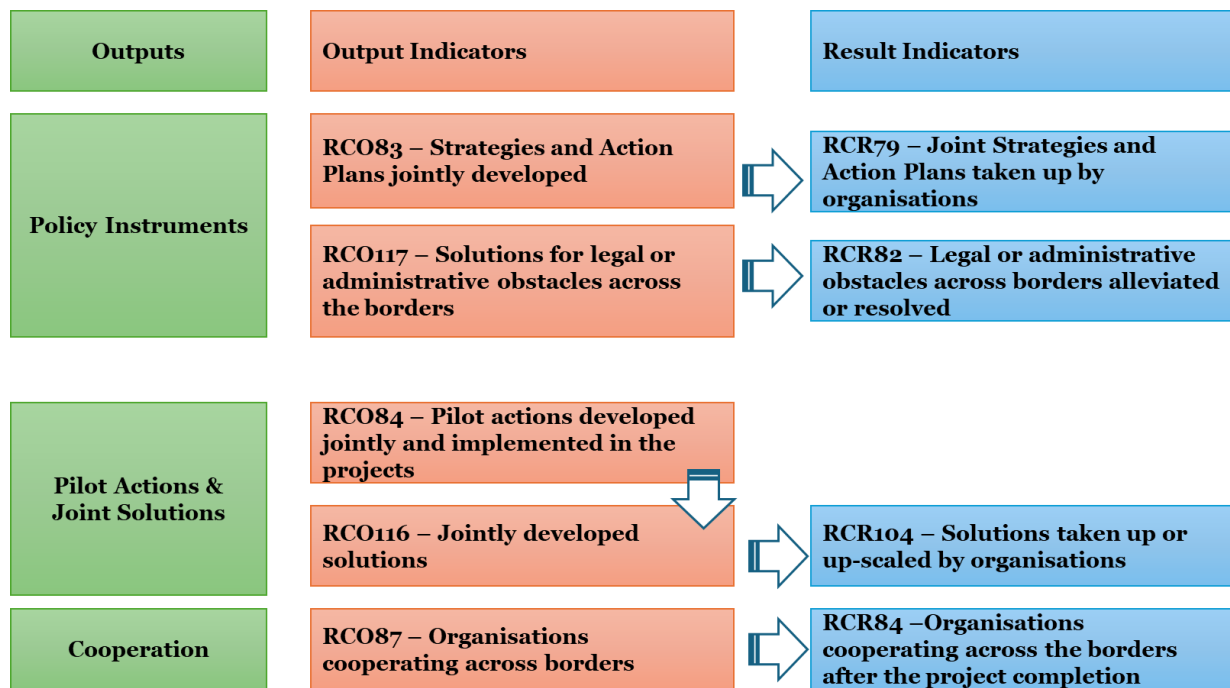
**Considering the importance of the “cooperation” dimension for the programme, the output indicator RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders is mandatory for all projects.**

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

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

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 the project has ended.

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.

## 4. Procedure for the submission and selection of the projects

### 4.1 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: <https://www.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu>.

The application package contains:

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> call for proposal announcement
- The present application manual
- The IPA ADRION Cooperation Programme
- The off-line Application Form
- The compulsory templates to be filled in and uploaded on JEMS:
  - LP Declaration
  - PP Declaration
  - Declarations of interest of the associated partners (AP)
- The template of the power of signature in case the LP/PP/AP declaration is signed by a delegated person of the legal representative
- Subsidy Contract Template
- Partnership Agreement Template.

Additionally, but not part of the application package, the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS) guidance shall be provided.

Lead Partner, Project Partner, Associated Partner Declarations must be:

- Signed by the legal representative (or his/her authorized/delegated person)
- Provided on the headed paper of the organization
- Dated
- Stamped except for digitally signed declarations.

If the Lead Partner, Project Partner, Associated Partner does not have a valid digital signature, they can sign by hand, scan the declaration and upload it to JEMS in the “Application annexes” section.

In case the Lead Partner, Project Partner, Associated Partner declaration is signed by an authorized delegated person of the legal representative, it must be supported by the power of signature document.

As far as power of signature document is concerned:

- It must be in line with the national rules of the affected organization and shall be written in English. The identity of the signatory must be verified by either: a) attaching a valid copy of the signatory's ID, or b) using a digital signature (in this case, the copy of the ID is not required).

In this regard, a template provided by IPA ADRION Programme can be used. If the Programme template is not used, the alternative document must contain the same information as requested in the programme template, in order to comply with the related eligibility requirements.

Valid digital signature must comply with all the minimum qualitative requirements present in the PADES signature: the use of the DSS demonstration WebApp available at the following link is recommended:

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-building-blocks/DSS/webapp-demo/validation>

Lead Partner, Project Partner, Associated Partner Declarations digitally signed or by hand, and, if this is the case, power of signature and the valid ID of the delegated person must be uploaded to JEMS in the “Application annexes” section.

**Use of digital signature is strongly recommended.**

## 4.2 Application Form

The project proposals shall be submitted via JEMS, by filling-in the pre-defined AF template; an off-line AF template is provided in the application package for information purpose only.

**Applicants are strongly advised to read the JEMS guidance carefully when filling-in the AF. JEMS is provided with a set of blocks to guide the applicants and avoid the most common errors. 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 checking the accuracy of the AF before its submission: the LP is therefore strongly encouraged to check that the AF has been correctly filled-in and no section or part of it has been left blank to avoid errors that could bring to the ineligibility of the project proposal.**

**System blocks assist applicants but do not replace compliance with the administrative and eligibility requirements. The final responsibility of the completeness and accuracy of the AF and its annex rests with the LP. Applicants are strongly advised to carefully read the *Annex 3 Admissibility and eligibility grids* in order to comply with the formal requirements set by the call. The LPs are strongly advised to complete and submit their project proposals without waiting the last few 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 before the submission and related to the slowdown of JEMS will not be accepted. Additionally, the IPA ADRION programme will not accept any complaint from LPs which have failed to meet the deadline.**

Project proposals shall write their project acronym in CAPITAL LETTERS only.

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
<b>A – Project identification</b>
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>B – Project partners</b>

<b>B.1 Project partners</b>
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> )
<b>Budget</b>
Co-financing ( <i>drop-down menu</i> )
Associated partners
Legal representative ( <i>free text boxes</i> )
Contact person ( <i>free text boxes</i> )
<b>C – Project description</b>
<b>C.1 Project overall objective (<i>free text box</i>)</b>
<b>C.2 Project relevance and context</b>
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 your project build on available knowledge? ( <i>free text box</i> )
<b>C.3 Project partnership (<i>free text box</i>)</b>
<b>C.4 Project workplan</b>
C.4.1 Work package
<b>C.5 Project results (<i>select result indicators from drop-down menu and fill-in the requested fields</i>)</b>
<b>C.6 Project time plan (<i>automatically generated</i>)</b>
<b>C.7 Project management</b>
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> )
<b>C.8 Long-term plans</b>
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> )
<b>Tables related to sections D and E will be downloadable from a separated excel file</b>
<b>D – Project budget</b>
<b>D.1 Project budget per co-financing source (Fund) – breakdown per partner (<i>automatically generated</i>)</b>
<b>D.2 Project budget – overview per partner/per cost category (<i>automatically generated</i>)</b>
<b>D.3 Overview budget/period</b>
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> )
<b>E – Lump sums</b>
<b>E.1 Project lump sums (<i>fill-in the grid</i>)</b>

Below are some instructions on how to correctly complete the AF in the correct way. 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 information provided is for illustrative purpose only; it is up to the LP to submit a complete AF and to decide the intensity of the detail to be provided.

The level of detail and clarity of the proposal will influence its quality and related assessment. Depending on the information inserted in the AF, the quality of the proposal will be then assessed in the evaluation phase.

## A. Project identification

This section contains the following information: project acronym and title; Lead Partner organization name; project duration and summary.

The project summary is one of the key parts of this section to which project proposals should pay particular attention; it should describe the main challenges addressed by the project; the overall main objective of the project and the expected change it will bring; the main outputs that will be produced; the approach adopted and explain why the transnational approach is needed, as well as the novelties that the project intends to bring in the area. It also contains some automatically generated tables that provide an overview on project budget and project outputs and results.

## B. Project partners

This section includes a detailed description of each financing partner (e.g.: identity, address, legal representative, partner's motivation, and contribution; budget and co-financing).

In accordance with the rules of the call for proposal, in the budget section it is necessary to select per each PP the chosen partner budget options, i.e.: the optional or mandatory use of the flat rate for certain budget lines. The LP shall insert all the planned expenditures for each partner, each cost category, including information like the unit type, the price per unit, the number of units and the description of the expenditure. In addition, it is required to make reference in the description of expenditure to the project activities/deliverables and outputs as indicated in the workplan.

In case of staff costs based on real costs, it is also required to indicate the method chosen for its calculation (i.e. full time or part time with fixed percentage).

In the section “co-financing”, the applicant shall select the source of co-financing and the status of the contribution.

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

## C. Project description

This section has several 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.

In C1 section (Project overall objective), it is required to indicate the project overall objective. While identifying the project main objective; the applicant must take into account how it contributes to the programme's specific objective selected.

Within **C.2** (Project relevance and context) it is requested to: describe the relevance of the project for the programme area, in terms of common challenges and opportunities addressed (C.2.1); and the new solutions that will be developed and implemented during the project lifetime (C.2.2); explain why transnational cooperation is needed to achieve the project's objectives and result (C.2.3); indicate who will benefit from the project results (C.2.4); how the project contributes to wider strategies and policies (C.2.5); indicate which synergies are envisaged by the project (C.2.6); and indicate how the project is built on the available knowledge; capacity building activities and eventual leverage effect activities foreseen if this is the case (C.2.7).

In the section C.2.4, it is required to identify the main target groups benefitting from project outputs: selecting them from a drop-down menu and providing a clear justification on their involvement in specification column, as well as to indicate for each of them which is the benefit that they will gain from the project.

In section C.2.5, the project must indicate in which way it will contribute to the implementation of EUSAIR Strategy Action Plan and to the European Green Deal. It is required to provide clear reference to the Action Plan measures, avoiding mere declarations of intent.

In C.2.6 section, it is required to indicate the synergies with past or current initiatives, lessons learnt and capitalisation on the available knowledge.

In C.2.7 section, it is required to indicate on which knowledge the project proposal is built, the foreseen capacity building activities and, if applicable, the leverage effects. Please refer to chapter 2; paragraph 2.3. Potential synergies with granted projects can be found in [www.keep.eu](http://www.keep.eu), the repository of all EU Interreg projects; detailed information on the 2014-2020 ADRION granted projects can also be found in <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/index.php/results/projects/project-websites>.

In **C.3** (Project partnership) the LP shall explain how the constituted partnership can effectively implement the foreseen activities and deliver the planned outputs. In particular, the role of each partner in the project implementation shall be described, including the associated partners. 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 outputs.

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

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

**As Management and Communication are not stand-alone work packages, their activities must be included in each work package.**

As far as **project management** is concerned, its overall description – e.g.: how the project coordination will be ensured, internal communication within the partnership – shall be provided in section C.7 (see below).

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.

Regarding **communication** activities, 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 the interested parties.

Although a communication strategy is not requested, it is strongly recommended; as an alternative, potential beneficiaries are asked to provide with information on the envisaged communication approach according to each specific WP.

Project specific objective shall also include one or more communication objectives.

While elaborating communication activities, potential beneficiaries shall also take into account that 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.

These activities and related costs shall not, therefore, be included in the project budget.

Beside the communication activities listed in the application form, as a beneficiary of EU funds, projects 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 projects shall envisage that in the implementation phase the following compulsory activities are implemented:

- 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.

The work plan of the project proposals to be submitted in the framework of the second call for proposals project must also include **Capacity development activities (mandatory)**.

Specific activities devoted to capacity development must be included in the most appropriate Work Package(s). Capacity development activities must include one or more of the following actions:

Type of actions	Description
<b>Territorial peer review</b>	Territorial peer review is addressed to dedicated stakeholders to improve planning and implementation abilities through a process of benchmarking and peer learning. Peer review must involve other public/private institutions located in at least 2 different participating countries of the IPA ADRION Programme area involved in the project, and experts.
<b>Partner-to-partner exchange</b>	A partner-to-partner exchange may bring together e.g.: a ministry, a regional administration, a city municipality, a chamber of commerce facing a specific implementation challenge related to a specific topic, and another ministry, regional administration, city municipality or chamber of commerce from a different ERDF participating country with expertise able to tackle the identified challenge.  In case the project intends to adopt this tool, at least two partner-to-partner exchange activities must be envisaged in the project proposal.
<b>Study visits</b>	A pre-identified group of officials visit another institution in a different IPA ADRION participating country to observe and learn how a policy of interest is implemented. The study visits may last from a minimum of 10 days up to a maximum of 4 months (cumulatively).
<b>Seminars, on-line training courses</b>	Seminars and/or on-line training courses are addressed to a number of participants higher than 15. They may be implemented upon condition that territorial peer review and/or partner-to-partner exchange are set in place. The activity is targeted at institution(s) willing to widen the knowledge to its/their employees in charge of a certain topic. While the initiative to perform these activities may come from the upper managerial level, the

	implementation may be also performed by operational levels of the institution(s).
<b>Tutoring for knowledge sharing</b>	<p>Knowledge sharing is the exchange of information, expertise, or skills. Tutoring for knowledge sharing may be addressed to a number of participants higher than 15 and it may be implemented upon condition that territorial peer review and/or partner-to-partner exchange are set in place. The activity is targeted at institution(s) willing to widen the knowledge to its/their employees in charge of a certain topic. While the initiative to perform these activities may come from the upper managerial level, the implementation may be also performed by operational levels of the institution(s). Tutoring for knowledge sharing may be focused on the reuse of what others have already learned and/or created, may be organized in several ways and may include workshops, e-learning, user manuals.</p> <p>Some knowledge sharing examples include user manuals, training documents, used methodologies, best-proven practices, storytelling, lessons learned, e-learning.</p>

In addition, activities related to strengthening the leverage effects of investments and policy development may be included (**optional**). Where applicable, the leverage effect activities must be included in the most appropriate Work Package(s).

The partnership is required to describe the investment and how it will be upgraded within the project proposal, i.e.:

- a) Description of the ongoing/finalized investment and the related funded sources (e.g. mainstream, national, NRRP or other)
- b) Description of the need to upgrade the ongoing /finalized investment
- c) Description of how the leverage effect is embedded in the workplan. (section C.2.7 and the dedicated activity).

The project proposal must not be an expression of future intentions but must be firmly anchored in the existing local reality and realistically linked to ongoing or completed investment.

**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 sections and includes a description of project coordination and internal communication.

In the different sections it will be requested to indicate:

- Which partner shall be responsible for coordination and the professional figures involved and structures in place to facilitate this task and ensure fair relation with the partnership (e.g.: project steering group)<sup>26</sup>;

<sup>26</sup> The LP shall envisage the setting in place of adequate project coordination structure(s) (e.g. project steering group, coordination board, steering committee etc.) ensuring that all PPs are equally represented, including the Associated Partners. The project steering group can also involve representatives of institutions not directly involved in the project but that can contribute to its implementation or to the dissemination of its outcomes.

- Envisaged approaches and tools to evaluate the project quality;
- Which partner shall coordinate the communication process and the professional figures involved;
- The type of cooperation that shall be adopted by the partnership (joint development, joint implementation, joint financing and joint staffing which is the only one not compulsory);
- Which horizontal principles will be tackled by the project.
- Responsibilities, deadlines in financial flows, reporting flows, project related transfers, reclaims, etc.

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

- C.8.1 Ownership
- C.8.2 Durability
- C.8.3 Transferability.

The project shall 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, based on the Partners' budget reported in Section **B Project partners**, where the budget figures have to be manually inserted for each partner.

## **E. Lump sums**

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

## **4.3 Submission of the applications**

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The project steering group:

- 1) Is the decision-making body at project level.
- 2) Meets on a regular basis in order to adopt the necessary measures. In general, it should have a proactive approach rather than reacting to already existing situations.
- 3) Is governed by its own procedures on decision making.
- 4) Is usually supported by the LP project management staff in its role of decision maker.

Additionally, the project steering group should:

- a) Be responsible for monitoring the implemented activities and their quality.
- b) Be responsible for monitoring the contribution to programme outputs and result indicators with respect to the approved AF and to the achievement of the mid-term review targets.
- c) Be responsible for monitoring the financial and overall implementation performance and 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 specially organised working groups or task forces within the project, if necessary.

The LP must regularly inform and invite the MA/JS to the project steering group meetings. The MA/JS reserve the right to participate. Minutes of the meetings and signed participants' list must be provided to the JS after the meeting and as attachments to the project reports.

Applications must be submitted through the on-line system (JEMS) accessible via the programme web site. The submission process is paperless.

LPs need to register on 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 (CEST time) reported in the Announcement of the Call for proposals and in the paragraph ***Opening of the Call for proposals*** of the present manual.

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.

#### **4.4 Assessment of the 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 included in the Programme Roster of the 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 listed in Annexes 3 and 4. The results of the assessment are reported in a project assessment grid to be submitted to MC and will support the MC decision for granting.

The MC will make the final decision regarding the proposals to be funded.

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

##### **4.4.1 Admissibility and eligibility checks**

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

Only those applications which successfully pass the admissibility checks will progress to the eligibility checks; and only those that pass the eligibility 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 existence of all requirements is performed by the JS with the support of the NCPs which will be mainly responsible for verifying the correctness of the applicants' legal status, the location of the beneficiary, and the number of times the same organization has applied. The LP may be contacted by its 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.

#### 4.4.2 Quality checks

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

The aim of the quality assessment is to provide the MC with an overall picture containing the relevant information on the relevance and feasibility of project proposals on the basis of which the decision to fund or not the project can be taken. The quality assessment is performed according to a list of quality criteria and sub-criteria and related scores.

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.

The strategic and operational assessments are based on a set of criteria, to which points are assigned in accordance with the table below:

<b>Strategic assessment</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>
	<i>Project relevance</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>Project Intervention Logic</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>Partnership and Cooperation Character</i>	<i>10</i>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Operational assessment</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>
	<i>Management and Communication</i>	<i>10</i>
	<i>Budget</i>	<i>15</i>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>

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

<b>5</b>	<b>Excellent</b> – the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is of excellent quality and provides clear and coherent information
<b>4</b>	<b>Good</b> – the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is clear and contain minor shortcomings
<b>3</b>	<b>Fair</b> - the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is sufficiently clear and requires further clarification from the applicant
<b>2</b>	<b>Sufficient</b> - the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is of low quality
<b>1</b>	<b>Poor</b> - 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. Sub-criteria are listed in Annex 4 - Quality assessment grid.

The score attributed to the strategic and the operational assessment is the sum of the scores attributed to each of their attributed criteria.

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 30/50 (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.

If the project proposal has achieved this minimum score, the assessors will check whether the optional activities “*Strengthening the leverage effects of investments and policy development*” have been included in the project proposal and will proceed with their evaluation.

As optional project activities, they will not contribute to the strategic qualitative assessment, but they may increase the project’s overall final score by a maximum of 3 points, provided that the project is assessed positively from a strategic point of view.

### *Operational assessment*

As far as the Operational Assessment is concerned, the proposals not reaching **at least 15/25 (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 **45/75 (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***).

### **4.4.3 Anti-fraud checks**

The anti-fraud check consists of verifying the existence of previous fraudulent behaviours or other fraudulent practices by the partners involved in the project proposal. The anti-fraud check will only be carried out on those applications recommended for funding up to the financial availability of the call.

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.

### **4.4.4 Verification on absence of double funding**



In accordance with Art. 181.4.b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046 (Financing Regulation), the 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 or EURO MED programmes.

This check will only be carried out 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.

#### **4.4.5 State Aid Compliance checks**

The State Aid check 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 the applications recommended for funding up to the financial availability of the call.

**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.

#### **4.4.6 Absence on infringement procedures**

The MA, in cooperation with the NCPs, shall verify that, in accordance with art. 22.4 lett. i) of the Interreg Regulation the project is not directly affected by any infringement procedure(s) currently being pursued through legal action by the European Commission, putting at risk the future legality and regularity of expenditure

**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.**

#### ***4.4.7 Finalisation of the project assessment grid***

The results of the quality assessment, double funding verifications, anti-fraud checks, and absence of infringement procedures shall be reported 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 and include special conditions for approval if necessary.

### **4.5 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.

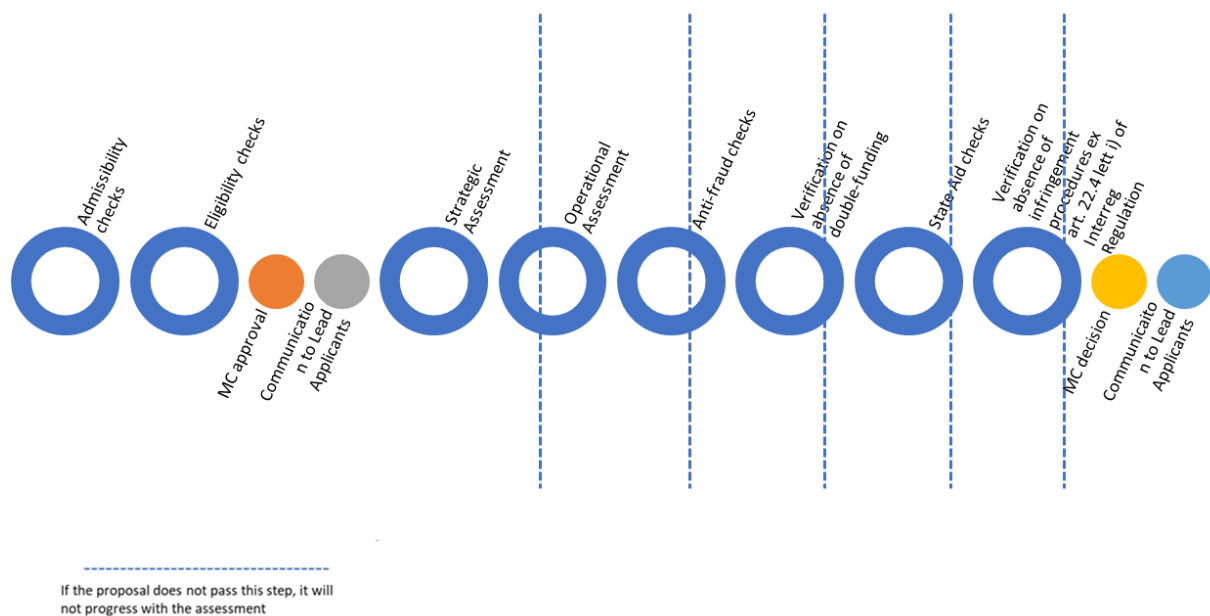
If a project proposal is approved under conditions, the latter are approved by the MC too; conditions may address the project partnership, work plan and budget. A lower budget than the amount requested by the partnership may also be foreseen.

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:



## 4.6 Negotiation process

The negotiation process is the period during which the project partnership has to comply with the requests for improvements set forth by the IPA ADRION MC.

The negotiation process is conducted on the basis of the LP principle, meaning that communication is done exclusively between the JS and MA on one side and the LP, representing the project partnership, on the other.

The process is coordinated by the JS on behalf of the MA, which informs the MC on the outcomes of the process.

If necessary, the negotiation process can be supported by an event organised by the JS addressed to the LPs, during which the JS provides information on the most common requirements to be fulfilled as well as bilateral meetings with the projects.

During the negotiation process the LP must:

- Ensure that all PPs are aware of the conditions for improvement
- Involve all PPs during the revision if the project proposal, especially if conditions for improvement affect the budget, the provision of additional information on planned outputs and deliverables
- Revise the project proposal in accordance with the requests for improvement, related activities and budget. The revision of the AF must be done through JEMS and resubmitted as many times as needed until the conditions for improvements are fulfilled
- Provide any further documentation/declarations requested during the negotiation process and aimed at ensuring an early project start.

During the negotiation phase, the JS will also check if the organizations involved in the recommended for funding projects failed to comply with “reputational conditions” relating to past or present participation in other Interreg programmes (i.e.: failure to reimburse another partner or the Managing Authority of another Interreg Programme). In case of persistent failure of

reimbursement, the affected partner is excluded. Partnership eligibility shall be counterchecked again.

After having submitted the revised AF via JEMS, the JS verifies whether all conditions are satisfactorily met and the availability of the required additional documentation, if requested.

The information regarding the finalization of the negotiation process is further communicated to the MC.

If the negotiation process is not successfully finalized within the time set forth by the MC, the MC shall be informed accordingly.

The end of the negotiation process is established by an official communication sent by the MA/JS and the sending of the grant offer.

## **4.7 Contractual provisions**

### ***Principle of non-cumulative award (double funding)***

The LP, on behalf of its partnership, is required to provide to 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 the project implementation, it is found that an activity/item of expenditure co-financed by IPA ADRION Programme, is also co-financed by another public fund, the MA may:

- Require the modification of the activities concerned 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.

## **4.8 Project legal framework**

Once the project has been granted and has fulfilled all the conditions for improvement set forth by the MC, if present, a grant offer is sent by the MA.

The subsidy contract constitutes the main legal framework for the implementation of the project. It is an agreement that governs the relationship between the MA and the LP, which acts on behalf of the entire partnership in accordance with 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 to accept the grant offer sent by the MA/JS and to return the signed copy. If the deadline is missed, the MA offer loses its validity, unless MA agrees to extend 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.

#### **4.9 Advanced 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 to the PPs located in the IPA participating countries only**.

The advanced payment is up to **20% of the Interreg funds** of the affected 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 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.

#### **4.10 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.

#### **4.11 Publicity by the programme**

Based on art. 49 of CPR, the MA shall publish the list of the granted projects, 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.

#### **4.12 Complaint 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 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: [IPA-ADRION@regione.emilia-romagna.it](mailto:IPA-ADRION@regione.emilia-romagna.it). 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 Monitoring Committee participating countries representatives - current and future Monitoring Committee Chair - and the MA. The JS is involved with an advisory function.

The complaint can only refer to:

- Outcomes of the admissibility and eligibility checks.
- 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 to MA/JS about 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 set put in place a mediation procedure. If no 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.

#### **4.13 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)

#### **4.14 Monitoring of the performance and mid-term 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.**

#### **4.15 Programme 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
- FAQ
- Support to beneficiaries via email (info@interregadrion.eu), and online/in person meetings.
- IPA ADRION Partner search Platform.

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

Support of the JS and NCPs shall not be guaranteed after 19 June 2025.

#### **IPA ADRION Partner search Platform**

The platform helps a potential beneficiary build up the project partnership thanks to the opportunity of joining a network of interested parties. The platform allows anyone to publish a profile showing an interested field of activities and expertise. A user has the chance to actively interact with other users through a forum section.

In addition to that, the platform gives the opportunity to publish project ideas to be shared with interested partners for potential synergies.

Link to the Platform: [Landingpage – Interreg IPA Adrion – Partnersearch Platform](#)

How it works: anyone can register by clicking on “Register” or “Join Network” and activate his/her profile. A notification will be sent to the email address used for the registration in order to complete the registration.

Once the registration is done, the user may come back to the Platform just by logging in with his/her credentials. The user will be able to access the dashboard with all relevant sections needed for partner search, the publication of project ideas and the exchange of views through the forum. User can receive notifications whenever something relevant happens on the platform.

## Annex 1- Overview IPA ADRION – Priority Axes; Specific Objectives and indicative actions to be granted under the 2nd restricted 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	
<b>Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area</b>	<p>The Adriatic-Ionian region does not stand out for its innovation and R&amp;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 <b>Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)</b> to pool together existing capacities and assure critical mass with a focus on areas of mutual interest like <b>health and quality of life, agri-food and safe nutrition, sustainable tourism and creative economy</b>. Proposed actions shall also contribute, among else, to the harmonization of standards, job creation and better R&amp;D cooperation between academia and private businesses on trans-regional level.</p> <p>To turn these strategies into practice, <b>multi-level governance</b> structures that enable <b>trans-regional cooperation</b> highlighting land and maritime Adriatic-Ionian specificities need to be supported. <b>Clusters, transnational strategic partnerships, innovation networks</b> and similar efforts aiming to assemble <b>quadruple helix actors</b> along important value chains are important <b>tools</b> to facilitate <b>transnational cooperation</b> that will be strengthened. While the above-mentioned efforts will improve the framework conditions of stakeholders, dedicated actions will be implemented to <b>promote and scale-up the use of advanced technologies</b> and encourage the <b>development of transnationally designed products and services</b> with clear preference of S3 priority areas. Increased use of <b>e-services</b>, ranging from <b>e-government over e-learning up to e-marketing</b>, will further improve the framework conditions for innovation and transformation.</p>
<b>Thematic Focus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> call</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ S3 in common areas of specialization</li> <li>○ Social innovation</li> <li>○ Digital technologies</li> <li>○ Health</li> <li>○ Creative and cultural industry</li> <li>○ Tourism innovation</li> </ul>
<b>Indicative actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop transnational Smart Specialization Strategies in the main areas of specialization of the Adriatic Ionian area (especially in the following main sectors: health and quality of life, agri-food and safe nutrition, sustainable tourism, and creative economy)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Promote and set-up multi-level governance schemes to facilitate transnational cooperation models to address challenges in common areas of specialization</li> <li>○ 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 and social innovation (as indicated in indicative action No.1)</li> <li>○ 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 challenges like demographic change</li> <li>○ Promote the development of transnational partnerships, cluster-to-cluster cooperation, innovative networks, and similar initiatives</li> <li>○ Support digital divide reduction by addressing sustainable development, resilience to climate change, as well as addressing wellbeing - including health for the youth and elderly, hospital, and home care - and demographic trends</li> <li>○ Develop and implement e-services such as: e-government, e-learning, or e-marketing or digital tools for industrial and creative production</li> <li>○ Support the development of transnational and macro-regional clusters in the emerging sectors as creative and digital industries; medical devices, as well as sustainable tourism, etc (sectors as indicated in indicative action No.1).</li> </ul>
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Output Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
<b>RCO83</b>	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	22
<b>RCO84</b>	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	44
<b>RCO87</b>	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	132
<b>RCO116</b>	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	22

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

<b>Expected Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Setting in place a favourable framework on the main strategic areas of interest</li> <li>○ Boost the capacities and potentials of the innovation players</li> <li>○ Facilitate innovation gaps closing and support technology transfer and new technologies uptake</li> <li>○ Support digitalization</li> <li>○ Revamp traditional sectors and shape emerging ones</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Produce leverage effects for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level.</li> </ul>
<b>Target groups</b>	<p>Target groups comprise: <b>triple or quadruple innovation helix system</b> capable of innovation-generating processes (<b>industry, university, government, civil society</b>) and interaction aimed at accelerating the transfer of research and innovation results to promote regional growth i.e.: <b>local, regional and national public authorities, organisations responsible for research and development, innovation, technology transfer institutions</b> established and managed by public authorities, <b>sectoral and regional development agencies, networks, cluster initiatives and associations, universities and research facilities, business support organisations</b> (e.g. chambers of commerce, business innovation centres, technology information centres), <b>higher education, education/training centres and schools, NGOs, non-profit organisations, SMEs, industrial and technological hubs and parks.</b></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	
<b>Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area</b>	<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>
<b>Thematic Focus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> call</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Climate change</li> <li>○ Natural and man-made disasters</li> </ul>
<b>Indicative actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop, implement, and promote transnational climate change adaptation strategies, plans and test solutions with a focus on people's health, preservation of natural and cultural heritage and urban areas</li> <li>○ In the framework of Maritime Spatial Planning activities, develop transnational joint plans and pilot actions to boost resilience to climate change in marine ecosystems</li> <li>○ Design and implement strategies and action plans at local, regional and national level for the safeguard of water resources (rainwater management, river and lake water retention, water scarcity, drinking water, water availability, agricultural forecasting, breeding, industry and population).</li> </ul>

Output Indicators				
ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)

<b>RCO83</b>	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	strategy/action plan	0	28
<b>RCO84</b>	Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	pilot actions	0	18
<b>RCO87</b>	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	114
<b>RCO116</b>	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	9

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

<b>Expected Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Establishing shared transnational and macro-regional actions to face climate change and prevent natural and man-made disasters</li> <li>○ Boost policy learning, improve awareness and strengthen transnational dialogue</li> <li>○ Leverage for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level.</li> </ul>
<b>Target groups</b>	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 2.3	
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	
<b>Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area</b>	<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>
<b>Thematic Focus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> call</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Biodiversity protection and preservation, including marine/natural protected areas</li> <li>○ Environmental pollution reduction and impacts on health population</li> <li>○ Tourism environmental impact</li> </ul>
<b>Indicative actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Collect compelling information and use it to develop advocacy material to strengthen synergies and increase preparedness among local/regional/national policy makers and administrators to set in place actions aimed at improving policy frameworks, governance and management schemes of existing or underway marine/natural protected areas</li> <li>○ Exchange of good practices and testing of solutions for sustainable tourism through participatory approaches and multi-level governance</li> <li>○ Identify and test joint action to ensure sustainable food and traditional agricultural products (e.g.: old seeds safeguard, traditional animal breeding etc.) to support the zero-km food chain, food safety and quality</li> <li>○ Contribute to the generation of positive impacts on the Adriatic-Ionian population's health through the identification of good practices and the implementation of pilot actions aimed at reducing air, water and soil pollution</li> <li>○ Define joint actions to enhance soil and water preservation by ensuring data collection and their public availability (e.g.: feeding EU networks like Data Network - EMODnet, agriculture data space)</li> </ul>

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

<b>RCO87</b>	Organisations cooperating across borders	organisations	0	114
<b>RCO116</b>	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	19

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

<b>Expected Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Setting the frame for shared transnational and macro-regional actions by repositioning protection and preservation of nature in its central role</li> <li>○ Leverage for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level</li> </ul>
<b>Target groups</b>	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 3	
Supporting a carbon neutral and better-connected Adriatic-Ionian region	
Specific Objective 3.1	
Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility	
<b>Territorial needs and challenges of the IPA ADRION area</b>	<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>
<b>Thematic Focus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> call</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intelligent transport system technologies/solutions for multimodal transport</li> <li>Dematerialization of transport paper procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Indicative actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and test innovative planning tools/solutions forecasting future demand for public transport in view of the impact caused by current socio-demographic changes and present pandemic situation on intermodal national, regional and local mobility</li> <li>Implement transnational integrated action plans supporting the development of rail-sea transportation intended as intermodal and multimodal transport mode</li> <li>Map infrastructural, technological, legislative gaps and barriers to freight circulation including the legal and administrative variances hampering the efficiency of smooth transnational transport, in order to create a common transnational transport policy framework</li> <li>Improve accessibility within the Adriatic-Ionian region, with a focus on peripheral areas, to the TEN-T network through the implementation of action plans, tackling the bottlenecks hampering the transport sector growth and economic development</li> </ul>

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

<b>RCO116</b>	Jointly developed solutions	solutions	0	9
<b>RCO117</b>	Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified	solutions	0	5

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

<b>Expected Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contribute to the identification of new, shared, environmentally sustainable multimodal transport solutions and to the reduction of distance gaps characterising some areas/destinations</li> <li>○ Encourage new transport concepts following the pandemic crisis</li> <li>○ Minimize legal or administrative obstacles currently slowing down transport procedures in particular in seaports</li> <li>○ Strengthen cooperation among ports for joint identification of solutions aimed at up-scaling in particular with regard to their environmental impact</li> <li>○ Increase awareness and knowledge among relevant organizations, in particular seaports, and to identify new strategies to contribute to the EU Green Deal goals</li> <li>○ Produce leverage for potential further actions at cross-border and national/regional/local level</li> </ul>
<b>Target groups</b>	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 of 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 contains also 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

### 1.1. RCO 83 “Strategies and action plans jointly developed”

<b>Indicator code</b>	RCO 83
<b>Indicator name</b>	<b>Strategies and action plans jointly developed</b>
<b>Measurement Unit</b>	strategy/action plan
<b>Type of indicator</b>	output
<b>Definition</b>	<p>The indicator counts the number of <b>joint strategies or action plans</b> 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 <b>implies the involvement of the entire partnership participating countries</b> in the drafting process of the strategy or action plan.</p>
<b>Data Collection</b>	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
<b>Time of measurement</b>	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF
<b>Indications on counting and reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Only strategies and action plans jointly developed</b> by the project can be <b>counted under this indicator</b>.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Project management and communication strategy should not be counted under this indicator.</li> </ul>
<b>Minimum requirements of output formalization</b>	<p>The <b>strategy</b> must reflect the territorial needs and ensure its sustainability. It must provide <b>a common vision; overview of the state of play of the area; as well as a set of mid term and long term goals and objectives, based on a SMART approach (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-based)</b>.</p> <p>The <b>Action plan</b> must indicate the <b>necessary actions</b> to be implemented in order to reach the envisaged objectives, along with the related <b>timeline</b>. It should be designed following an <b>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</b>.</p>

<b>Corresponding Result Indicator</b>	RCR 79 “Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations”
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## 1.2 RCO 84 “Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects”

<b>Indicator code</b>	<b>RCO84</b>
<b>Indicator name</b>	<b>Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</b>
<b>Measurement Unit</b>	Pilot action
<b>Type of indicator</b>	output
<b>Definition</b>	<p>The indicator counts the <b>pilot actions developed jointly and implemented</b> by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test <b>procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or demonstration of practices</b>. In order to be counted by this indicator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the pilot action needs <b>not only to be developed, but also implemented</b> within the project, <b>and</b></li> <li>○ the implementation of the <b>pilot action should be finalised by the end of the project</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Jointly developed pilot action</b> must be developed and implemented <b>in a transnational context</b>.</p>
<b>Data Collection</b>	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
<b>Time of measurement</b>	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF
<b>Indications on counting and reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pilot actions developed by organisations coming from only one partner State cannot be counted under this indicator</li> </ul>
<b>Minimum requirements of output formalization</b>	<p>The document of <b>formalization of the “pilot action”</b> must contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The rationale of the pilot action, how it has been designed, including further identification of implemented tool(s)</li> <li>○ The goal of the pilot action must be also supported by technical evidence and adequate provision of data and information</li> <li>○ The methodological approach highlighting elements of novelties, excluded and adopted approaches and reasons why</li> <li>○ Information on the way the pilot action has been implemented and its results, including the environmental impact</li> <li>○ Outcomes of pilot action/s and the project partners/institutions involved.</li> </ul>
<b>Corresponding Indicator</b>	RCR 104 – Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations

### 1.3 RCO 116 “Jointly developed solutions”

<b>Indicator code</b>	<b>RCO116</b>
<b>Indicator name</b>	<b>Jointly developed solutions</b>
<b>Measurement Unit</b>	Solutions
<b>Type of indicator</b>	Output
<b>Definition</b>	<p>The indicator counts the <b>number of jointly developed solutions from joint pilot actions</b> implemented by supported projects. To be counted in the indicator, an identified solution should include <b>indications of the actions needed for it to be taken up or to be upscaled</b>.</p> <p>A jointly developed solution implies the involvement of organizations from <b>at least two participating countries</b> in the drafting and design process of the solution.</p>
<b>Data Collection</b>	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
<b>Time of measurement</b>	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF
<b>Indications on counting and reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Solutions developed under such indicator should not be focused on the legal and administrative frameworks;</li> <li>○ This indicator <b>counts only the solutions developed in the framework of the joint pilot actions</b>;</li> <li>○ Solutions developed by the organizations located only in one partner State cannot be counted under this indicator.</li> </ul>
<b>Minimum requirements of output formalization</b>	The document of formalization must provide clear <b>indication of the actions needed for it to be taken up or to be upscale</b> .
<b>Corresponding Indicator</b>	RCR 104 – Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations

#### 1.4 RCO 117 "Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified"

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



### 1.5 RCO 87 “Organisations cooperating across borders”

<b>Indicator code</b>	RCO 87
<b>Indicator name</b>	<b>Organisations cooperating across borders</b>
<b>Measurement Unit</b>	Organisations
<b>Type of indicator</b>	Output
<b>Definition</b>	<p>The indicator counts the <b>organisations cooperating formally in supported projects</b>.</p> <p>The organisations counted in this indicator are the <b>legal entities including project partners and associated organizations included in the project application form</b>.</p>
<b>Data Collection</b>	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
<b>Time of measurement</b>	Upon finalisation as foreseen in AF
<b>Indications on counting and reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Double counting must be avoided at project level. Therefore, only legal entities must be counted</li> <li>○ Different departments of one single institution can be counted separately only if they have an individual legal entity</li> </ul>
<b>Minimum requirements of output formalization</b>	n.a
<b>Corresponding Indicator</b>	RCR 84” Organisations cooperating across borders after project lifetime”

## RESULT INDICATORS

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

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

### 2.2 RCR 82 “Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved”

<b>Indicator code</b>	<b>RCR 82</b>
<b>Indicator name</b>	<b>Legal or administrative obstacles across borders alleviated or resolved</b>
<b>Measurement Unit</b>	solutions
<b>Type of indicator</b>	result
<b>Definition</b>	<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 <b>counts the number of legal or administrative obstacles that are alleviated or resolved based on solutions identified</b> through supported projects.</p>

<b>Data Collection</b>	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
<b>Time of measurement</b>	<b>Upon project finalisation or submission of the last project report (3 months from the project end date)</b>
<b>Indications on counting and reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The <b>adoption and implementation of the respective solutions</b> should take place <b>during the implementation</b> of the project or <b>immediately after the project completion (within 3 months after the project end date)</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Formalization</b>	The <b>adoption and implementation</b> of the respective solutions <b>must be documented</b> by the adopted organizations through decisions, acts of the adopted organization; letters of commitment; etc
<b>Corresponding Output Indicator</b>	RCO 117 "Solutions for legal or administrative obstacles across border identified"

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

<b>Indicator code</b>	<b>RCR 104</b>
<b>Indicator name</b>	<b>Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations</b>
<b>Measurement Unit</b>	Solution
<b>Type of indicator</b>	Result
<b>Definition</b>	<p>The indicator counts the <b>number of solutions</b>, other than legal or administrative solutions, that are <b>developed by supported projects and are taken up or upscaled</b> during the implementation of the project or within three months from 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>
<b>Data Collection</b>	IPA ADRION Electronic Monitoring system (JEMS)
<b>Time of measurement</b>	<b>Upon project finalisation or submission of the last project report (3 months from the project end date)</b>
<b>Indications on counting and reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Legal or administrative solutions must not be counted under this indicator, but on RCR 82;</li> <li>○ 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".</li> </ul>
<b>Formalization</b>	<p>The <b>uptake / up-scaling should be documented</b> by the adopting organisations in, for instance, strategies, action plans etc.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>Corresponding Output Indicator</b>	RCO 84 – Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in the projects RCO 116 – Jointly developed solutions

## 2.4 RCR 84 “Organisations cooperating across borders after project lifetime”

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

## Annex 3 – Admissibility and eligibility grids

### Admissibility criteria

1	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Admissibility criteria	Question N°	Admissibility questions	Y/N/NA	Consequence on failure
1.1	Application Form	Use of on-line system JEMS	1.1.1	Has the Application Form been submitted through JEMS?		The proposal is not receivable
1.2	Application Form and Declarations	Completeness of the submitted Application Form and Declarations	1.2.1	Have all the mandatory sections of the Application Form been filled in?		The proposal is rejected
			1.2.2	Has the Application Form been filled in English?		The proposal is rejected
			1.2.3	Has the Lead Partner Declaration been submitted through JEMS?		The proposal is rejected
			1.2.4	Has the Lead Partner declaration been fully filled in and in English using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)?		The proposal is rejected In case the LP declaration is not completely filled in or altered (missing/added/changed parts of the declaration) the project is rejected.
			1.2.5	Is the Lead Partner Declaration signed?		Rejection of the project proposal if the LP declaration is not signed.
				Is the Lead Partner Declaration signed by the legal representative or his/her delegated person?		Rejection of the project proposal
				If the Lead Partner Declaration is not signed by the legal representative, is the power of signature enclosed?		Rejection of the project proposal
				In case the power of signature is enclosed, is it provided through the template provided by IPA		Rejection of the project proposal

	ADRION? If yes, has the template been filled in with all the required information?		
	If the Lead Partner has used a different document to attest the power of signature, is it in English language?		Rejection of the project proposal
	If the Lead Partner has used a different document to attest the power of signature, does it contain all the following requested information? - name of the legal representative, date and place of birth -name of the organization and reference of the project proposal it intends to lead -name of the delegated person, date and place of birth -name of the organization and reference of the project proposal it is delegated to sign for		Rejection of the project proposal
	Is the signature of the power of signature digital? If yes, is it valid?		Rejection of the project proposal
	If the power of signature is signed by hand, has the identity document been enclosed?		Rejection of the project proposal
	Is the enclosed identity document valid?		Rejection of the project proposal
	Has the power of signature been dated?		Rejection of the project proposal
1.2.6	Has/Have Project Partners' Declarations been submitted through JEMS?		<p>The Project Partner is excluded</p> <p>The project proposal is rejected if:</p> <p>1) the exclusion of such Project Partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements</p> <p>2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.</p>

	Has/Have the Project Partners' Declarations been fully filled in and in English using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)?		<p>The Project Partner is excluded</p> <p>In case the Project Partner declaration is not completely filled in or altered (missing/added/changed parts of the declaration) the project partner is excluded.</p> <p>The project proposal is rejected if:</p> <p>1) the exclusion of such Project Partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements</p> <p>2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.</p>
	Is the Project Partner Declaration signed by the legal representative or his/her authorised delegated person?		<p>The Project Partner is excluded</p> <p>The project proposal is rejected if:</p> <p>1) the exclusion of such Project Partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements</p> <p>2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.</p>
	If the Project Partner Declaration is not signed by the legal representative, is the power of signature enclosed?		<p>The project partner is excluded</p> <p>The project proposal is rejected if:</p> <p>1) the exclusion of such Project Partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements</p>



			2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.
	In case the power of signature is enclosed, is it provided through the template provided by IPA ADRION? If yes, has the template been filled in with all the required information?		<p>The Project Partner is excluded</p> <p>In case the power of signature declaration is not completely filled in or altered (missing/added/changed parts of the declaration) the project partner is excluded.</p> <p>The project proposal is rejected if:</p> <p>1) the exclusion of such Project Partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements</p> <p>2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.</p>
	If the Project Partner has used a different document to attest the power of signature, is it in English language?		<p>The Project Partner is excluded</p> <p>The project proposal is rejected if:</p> <p>1) the exclusion of such project partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements</p> <p>2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.</p>
	<p>If the Project Partner has used a different document to attest the power of signature, does it contain all the following requested information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- name of the legal representative, date and place of birth</li> <li>-name of the organization and reference of the project proposal it intends to be part of</li> <li>-name of the delegated person, date and place of birth</li> </ul>		<p>The Project Partner is excluded</p> <p>The project proposal is rejected if:</p> <p>1) the exclusion of such project partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the</p>

	-name of the organization and reference of the project proposal it is delegated to sign for		minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.
	Is the signature of the power of signature digital? If yes, is it valid?		The project partner is excluded The project proposal is rejected if: 1) the exclusion of such project partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.
	If the Project Partner has signed the power of signature by hand, has the identity document been enclosed?		The project partner is excluded The project proposal is rejected if: 1) the exclusion of such project partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.
	Is the enclosed identity document valid?		The project partner is excluded The project proposal is rejected if: 1) the exclusion of such project partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements 2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.

	Has the power of signature been dated?		<p>The project partner is excluded</p> <p>The project proposal is rejected if:</p> <p>1) the exclusion of such project partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements</p> <p>2) two or more Project Partners are excluded.</p>
1.2.7	In case of involvement of Associated Partner(s), has (have) the Declaration(s) been submitted through JEMS?		The Associated partner(s) is excluded
	Has/have the Associated Partners' Declarations been fully filled in and in English using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)?		<p>The Associated partner(s) is excluded</p> <p>In case the Associated Partner declaration is not completely filled in or altered (missing/added/changed parts of the declaration) the Associated partner is excluded.</p>
	Is the Associated Partner Declaration signed by the legal representative or his/her authorised delegated person?		The Associated partner(s) is excluded
	If the Associated Partner Declaration is not signed by the legal representative, is the power of signature enclosed?		The Associated partner(s) is excluded
	In case the power of signature is enclosed, is it provided through the template provided by IPA ADRION? If yes, has the template been filled in with all the required information?		<p>The Associated partner(s) is excluded</p> <p>In case the power of signature declaration is not completely filled in or altered (missing/added/changed parts of the declaration) the project partner is excluded.</p>

				If the Associated Partner has used a different document to attest the power of signature, is it in English language?		The Associated partner(s) is excluded
				<p>If the Associated Partner has used a different document to attest the power of signature, does it contain all the following requested information?</p> <p>- name of the legal representative, date and place of birth</p> <p>-name of the organization and reference of the project proposal it intends to be associated with</p> <p>-name of the delegated person, date and place of birth</p> <p>-name of the organization and reference of the project proposal it is delegated to sign for</p>		The Associated partner(s) is excluded
				Is the signature of the power of signature digital? If yes, is it valid?		The Associated partner(s) is excluded
				If the Associated Partner has signed the power of signature by hand, has the identity document been enclosed?		The Associated partner(s) is excluded
				Is the enclosed identity document valid?		The Associated partner(s) is excluded
				Has the power of signature been dated?		The Associated partner(s) is excluded

## Eligibility criteria

1	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Question N°	Eligibility questions	Y/N/NA	Consequence on failure
2.1	Application Form, (section B.2) and Declarations	Partnership minimum eligibility requirements	2.1.1	Is the partnership composed of at least 2 project partners from 2 different ERDF participating countries and at least 2 project partners from 2 different IPA participating countries?		The project proposal is rejected
			2.1.2	Does the project include maximum 2 project partners located in the same participating country?		The project proposal is rejected
			2.1.3	Is the same organization acting as Lead Partner involved in maximum 1 project proposals?		Rejection of the project proposal arrived as last according to the time of submission
			2.1.4	Is the same organization involved in maximum 2 project proposals?		a) Exclusion of the project partner from the project proposals arrived after the first two involving the same organization. b) Rejection of the project proposal if: 1) the exclusion of such project partner leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements. 2) two or more project partners are excluded
2.2	Application Form, (section B.2) and Declarations	The Lead Partner is eligible	2.2.1	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 is endowed with legal personality?		The project proposal is rejected

			2.2.2	<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"> <li>1. Public body or body governed by public law, including their associations formed by one or several bodies governed by public law);</li> <li>2. EGTC within the meaning provided by art. 23.6 of Interreg Regulation;</li> <li>3. 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);</li> <li>4. International organization acting under the national law of one of the participating countries;</li> </ol>		The project proposal is rejected
2.3	Application Form, (section B.2)	Project financing partners are eligible	2.3.1	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 endowed with legal personality?		<p>a) Exclusion of the project partner</p> <p>b) Rejection of the project proposal if the exclusion of such a project partner leads to the non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements</p>
			2.3.2	<p>Does the Project Partner belong to one of the following categories as reported in the Application Manual and is endowed with legal personality?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public body or body governed by public law, including their associations formed by one or several bodies governed by public law);</li> <li>2. EGTC within meaning provided by art. 23.6 of Interreg Regulation;</li> <li>3. 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);</li> <li>4. International organization acting under the national law of one of the participating countries;</li> <li>5. Private body, including private companies.</li> </ol>		<p>a) Exclusion of the project partner</p> <p>b) Rejection of the project proposal if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the exclusion of such project partner leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.</li> <li>2) two or more project partners are excluded</li> </ol>

			2.3.4	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	2.4.1	Do project partners cooperate in all the following compulsory ways: joint development, joint implementation and joint financing?		The project proposal is rejected
2.5	Application Form, section C.6	Project duration respects the time limits set in the call ad/or Application Manual	2.5.1	Is the duration of the project proposal within the period specified in the call and/or the Programme Guide - i.e. up to 36 months?		The project proposal is rejected
2.6	Application Form, section D	Requested Interreg co-financing within the fixed thresholds	2.6.1	Is the requested Interreg co-financing within the maximum thresholds - i.e. up to 1,2 MEUR?		The project proposal is rejected



## Annex 4 – Quality assessment grid

	<b>STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT</b>	
	<b>Relevance</b>	<b>Up to 20</b>
1.a	Does the project proposal effectively tackles a common territorial challenge or asset of the Programme area? How will the programme area benefit?  Is the project proposal relevant in relation to the selected programme Specific Objective and indicative action(s) addressed by the call?	from 1 to 5
1.b	Is the project proposal clearly aligned to the relevant policy framework at different levels?  Is the project proposal specifically contributing to EUSAIR Actions Plan and how?	from 1 to 5
1.c	How does the project proposal contribute to the horizontal principles?  To which extent the LP declaration related to the “do not significant harm principle” is mirrored in the proposed project activities?	from 1 to 5
1.d	Does the project proposal clearly illustrate the proposed new solutions and approaches that it intends to develop during project lifetime?  Does the proposal adapt/capitalise already existing solutions?  Is the project proposal making use of synergies with other projects or initiatives and how are they exploited?	from 1 to 5
	<b>Intervention logic</b>	<b>Up to 20</b>
2.a	Is the project proposal intervention logic (i.e. identified challenges and needs, project overall and specific objectives, outputs and expected results) clearly defined and consistent?  Is the work plan, related time plan and the proposed target groups, consistent, realistic and transparent?	from 1 to 5
2.b	Do the project outputs and results clearly link to the programme output and results indicators?	from 1 to 5

	<p>Are the proposed project outputs and results indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feasible with the given resources – i.e. time, partners, budget?</li> <li>- realistic having regard to the proposed quantification (target value), description and approach?</li> </ul>	
2.c	Does the project proposal clearly explain the ownership/durability, long lasting effects and transferability of project outputs and results set in place? Are their financial, institutional, political sustainability ensured?	from 1 to 5
2.d	<p>Are the proposed capacity development activities clearly functional to the main project topic and do they effectively contribute to the achievement of the project objectives?</p> <p>Are the proposed capacity development activities designed in accordance with the programme application manual (i.e.: territorial peer review; partner to partner exchange; study visits, seminars, online training courses, tutoring for knowledge sharing)?</p> <p>Are the proposed capacity development activities tailored to the territorial needs and the interest of the specific territories, especially IPA participating countries and ERDF lagging behind areas?</p>	from 1 to 5
	<b>Partnership and Cooperation character</b>	<b>Up to 10</b>
3.a	<p>Is the partnership composition, including Associated Partners, relevant and strategic for the project proposal?</p> <p>Is it balanced with respect to the participating countries and the addressed sectors?</p> <p>Is it consistent in size and composition with the proposed activities?</p> <p>Are tasks and roles for each project partner clearly defined and properly distributed within the partnership?</p> <p>Is the transnational co-operation added value clear for the partners and the territories involved?</p>	from 1 to 5
3.b	<p>Does the lead partner have appropriate experience and competence in the addressed thematic field, including human and financial resources, to manage the project proposal?</p> <p>Do all project partners have competence and proven experience, including human and financial resources to implement the project proposal?</p>	from 1 to 5

	<b>Project Leverage Effects</b>	<b>Up to 3</b>
4.a	Is the proposed leverage effect properly described, consistent with the addressed project topic and realistic?  Is the number of partners engaged with investments in their own territories adequate? (i.e. at least 2 partners)?	from 0* to 3

*\*) 0 applies when leverage activities are not present*

	<b>OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>Up to 10</b>
	<b>Management and Communication</b>	
5.a	Does the foreseen management approach ensure a proper project management, coordination and risk mitigation?  Are the proposed project management structures (e.g. Steering Committee; Thematic Groups; WP leader etc.) and the internal communication flow appropriate and effective to ensure a sound project implementation and smooth co-operation among the partners?  To which extent the need for engaging external expertise is justified?	from 1 to 5
5.b	Are communication activities included in the work plan? Are they relevant for achieving planned communication objectives and appropriate to reach the selected target groups?  Do the proposed communication activities ensure a proper visibility of the project at different levels?	from 1 to 5
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Up to 15</b>
6.a	To which extent is the proposed budget transparent and detailed at partner and cost category level?  If applicable, is the application of simplified cost options (SCOs) justified and realistic, avoiding an artificial inflating of some cost categories?  If applicable, are SCOs for travel costs justified for each partner?	from 1 to 5
6.b	To which extent project budget is adequate to the proposed activities and project outputs?	from 1 to 5

	Is the financial allocation per cost category realistic and in line with the proposed workplan, included, if applicable, the budget allocated to pilot actions and equipment?	
6.c	Is the distribution of budget per partner and per period in line with the distribution of tasks, the workplan and the time plan?	from 1 to 5

## 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:

- EUR 100.000 for freight transport;
- EUR 30.000 and national maximum cumulative amount for fishery and aquaculture sector;
- 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 20a<sup>27</sup>, 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.

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<sup>27</sup> Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No.651/2014, introduced by the amending Regulation (EU) No 2021/1237.