

**Interreg V-B ADRIATIC-IONIAN
COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2014-2020**

ADRION

**Programme Manual Third calls for proposals
Priority Axes 1 and 3
Version - May 2019**

List of acronyms

ADRION	INTERREG V-B Adriatic-Ionian Transnational Cooperation Programme 2014 - 2020
AF	Application Form
CP	Cooperation Programme
eMS	Electronic monitoring system
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ESI FUNDS	European Investment and Structural Funds
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EUSAIR	European Union Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region
ERDF Partner States	Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IP	Investment Priority
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPA Partner States	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia
JS	Joint Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
NCP	National Contact Point
PA	Priority Axis
Partner States	Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia
PRAG	Procurement and Grants for European External Actions
SME	Small and Medium size Enterprises
S.O.	Specific Objective
T.O.	Thematic Objective
<i>Lead partner , Lead beneficiary and Lead Applicant have been used as synonyms</i>	
<i>Project Partner, project beneficiary and applicant have been used as synonyms</i>	
<i>Project Partner and Project (financing) Partner have been used as synonyms</i>	
<i>Operation and project have been used as synonyms</i>	

Disclaimer:

The present manual intends to provide useful information for applicants. It does not replace or overrule the official EU Regulations and Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian (ADRION) Cooperation Programme.

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GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN PROGRAMME

1 Introduction

The Programme Manual for the third calls for proposals for Priority Axes 1 and 3 is based on the legal framework establishing the ESI FUNDSs, the Adriatic-Ionian (ADRION) Cooperation Programme (CP) and the decisions adopted by the ADRION Monitoring Committee (MC).

It intends to give guidance to potential beneficiaries interested in submitting project applications in the framework of the third calls for proposals, which will be open exclusively to the Priority Axes 1 and 3.

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

Further guidelines and information on the submission of the project applications (e.g.: fact sheets, frequently asked questions) will be available on the ADRION web site www.adrioninterreg.eu

2 Legal and strategic framework

The legal framework supporting the ADRION Programme is the following:

Programme documents

- The Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian CP document adopted by the European Commission on 20 October 2015, Decision C(2015)7147;
- The Interreg ADRION Programme Strategic Environmental Assessment;
- The calls announcements of the two calls for proposals for Priority Axes 1 and 3.

European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020: Key regulations

- Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and on general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and its modifications;
- Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006;
- Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal;
- Regulation (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;
- Commission Implementing Decision of 16 June 2014 setting up the list of regions and areas eligible for funding from the European Regional Development Fund under the cross-border and transnational components of the European territorial cooperation goal for the period 2014 to 2020;
- 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;
- Delegated and Implementing Acts of the European Structural and Investments Funds Regulations for the period 2014-2020, in particular Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 481/2014 of 4 March 2014 supplementing Regulation No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to specific rules on eligibility of expenditure for cooperation Programmes;
- EU Directives and rules on public procurement.

External action and IPA II Regulations

- Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014, Common Implementing Regulation for External Actions;

- Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II);
- Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession assistance (IPA II).

Strategic framework

- EUROPE 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, Communication from the Commission, COM(2010)2020 final;
- Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020: Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions, Gödöllő, May 2011;
- Seventh Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion: Investment for jobs and growth. Promoting development and good governance in EU regions and cities, European Commission, October 2017.

European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

- Endorsement of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), European Council, Brussels, 23-24 October 2014;
- Council conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) - General Affairs Council meeting - Brussels, 29 September 2014;
- 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(2014) 357 final;
- 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 concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region SWD(2014) 190 final;
- Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies - 20.05.2014 - COM(2014) 284 final.

Kindly note that the above list is not exhaustive and it only includes the most relevant legislation.

For reference and further documentation please consult the following websites:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/legislation/regulations/

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/legislation/delegated-acts/

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/legislation/implementing-acts/

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/overview/index_en.htm

Thematic documents related to the topics of the present calls for proposals

Thematic documents specific to the present calls for proposals are provided in annexes 1.

Additional documents

- The present Programme Manual;
- Other programme publications (e.g.: Implementation Manual and fact sheets) published on ADRION web site.

3 ADRION Programme in a nutshell

The ADRION overall objective is to act as a policy driver and governance innovator fostering European integration among Partner States (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia), taking advantage from the rich natural, cultural and human resources surrounding the Adriatic and Ionian seas and enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Programme area.

ADRION intends to contribute to *“the harmonious development of the Union’s territory (...) and to strengthen cooperation by means of actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to the Union’s cohesion policy priorities”*¹ through the funding of project proposals aimed at positively contributing to the needs and challenges of the living conditions in the ADRION area (economic activities, quality of the environment, safety, etc.), rather than highlighting on the needs of a limited number of partners.

The Programme eligible area

The ADRION Programme includes a wide transnational area with more than 70 million inhabitants, and has distinct physical, environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics. Hence, it addresses all three dimensions of sustainability, including social, economic and environmental aspects, but also institutional elements.

The Programme eligible area involves 8 Partner States, primarily surrounding the Adriatic and Ionian Sea basin and covering an important terrestrial surface as well. Four countries are EU Member States, whereas the other four are candidate or potential candidate countries.

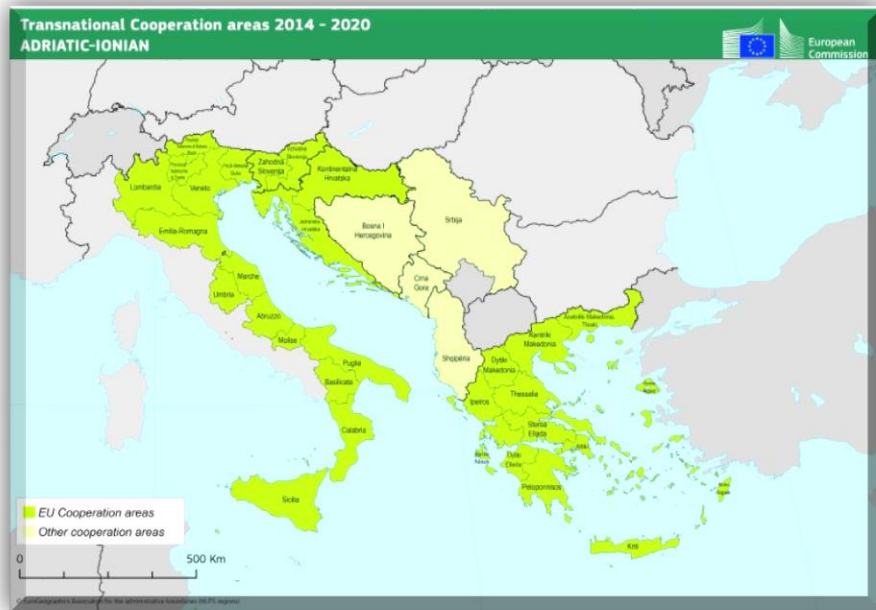
EU Partner States:

- Croatia (NUTS regions: Jadranska Hrvatska; Kontinentalna 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).

Non-EU Partner States:

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

¹Recitals No 4 and 6 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.



The EU countries benefit from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (hereinafter: ERDF Partner States), whereas the non-EU countries benefit from Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) contribution (hereinafter: IPA Partner States).

ADRION Programme budget

The overall Programme budget amounts to EUR 117.918.198, out of which EUR 99.156.616 of EU public resources (EUR 83.467.729 ERDF and EUR 15.688.887 IPA funds).

Funds devoted to operations to be allocated through calls for proposals refer to the three priority axes:

- a) Priority Axis No 1 - Innovative and smart Region;
- b) Priority Axis No 2 - Sustainable Region;
- c) Priority Axis No 3 – Connected Region.

	ERDF	IPA	National counterpart	Total funding
Priority Axis 1	16.693.547	2.998.111	3.475.815	23.167.473
Priority Axis 2	38.395.155	7.077.221	8.024.538	53.496.914
Priority Axis 3	15.024.191	2.684.333	3.125.034	20.833.558
TOTAL	70.112.893	12.759.665	14.625.387	97.497.945

ADRION Cooperation Programme structure

As all the Cooperation Programmes approved in the 2014-2020 programming period, ADRION is based on a result oriented approach too, and follows a Programme intervention logic aimed at defining its structure and goals in accordance with the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

The result oriented approach is based on:

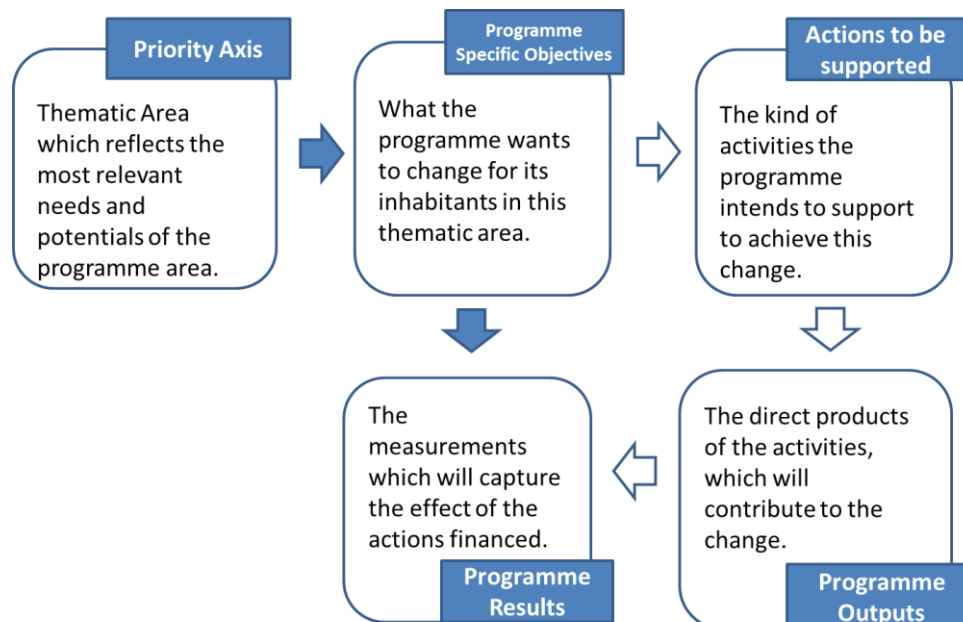
- a) Result orientation of the Programme;
- b) Programme monitoring through indicators;
- c) Definition of a performance framework whose targets must be reached in 2018;
- d) Evaluation and reporting.

The Programme intervention logic is the theoretical framework that structures and visualises the entire logical and sequential process adopted by the Programme to define its thematic and specific objectives aimed at contributing in reaching the expected change within the Programme area.

The Programme structure is characterised by Priority Axes, Programme Specific Objectives, actions to be supported, outputs and results each other closely interlinked.

In accordance with what above:

- A Priority Axis corresponds to a thematic objective as described in art. 9 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and to art. 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013;
- Each Priority Axis includes specific objectives and expected results for the specific objectives;
- Each Priority Axis contains a description of the type and examples of actions to be supported under each Priority Axis and their expected contribution to the specific objectives;
- Output indicators include their quantified target value, which are expected to contribute to the results (e.g.: number of firms supported, number of action plans elaborated, etc.);
- Result indicators relate to the Specific Objectives of the Priority Axis. They refer to the effects on direct beneficiaries brought about by the Programme. They provide information on changes to, for example, the behaviour, or the capacity or performance of beneficiaries. Such indicators can be physical (e.g.: reduction of energy consumption, increase of a competence etc.) or financial (e.g.: additional financial resource mobilised, decrease of an expense etc.)².



²ADRION Cooperation Programme, page 129.

ADRION has defined the topics of the present calls for proposals for Priority Axes 1 and 3 having regard to ADRION Cooperation Programme indicative actions not implemented by the projects funded in the framework of the first call for proposals, and topics relevant for the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region – EUSAIR. The alignment between ADRION and EUSAIR has been – therefore – already ensured.

The present Programme Manual addresses to both calls for proposals related to the selected topics in the framework of Priority Axes 1 and 3 as defined in paragraph 9.

4 Outputs - What the Programme funds

As reported in the previous paragraph, outputs indicators are used to measure the direct products (outputs) of supported projects, which in turn contribute to result.

Identified outputs are aimed at supporting the achievement of the desired changed.

Overall, ADRION shall support the delivery of the following outputs:

- Networking structures;
- Joint management systems and cooperation agreements;
- Strategies and Action Plans;
- Methodologies and Tools;
- Pilot Actions (Number of small scale investments and demonstration projects);

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

The realization of these outputs shall have to be attested by adequate supporting documents.

Specific reference to the outputs to be delivered in the framework of the present calls for proposals is provided in chapters 10.6, 11.5, 12.6 and 13.6.

5 Programme key principles

ADRION Programme does not start from scratch: it has its roots in the projects mainly funded by the transnational Programme South East Europe and by the IPA cross-border Adriatic Programme in the area.

A wide variety of actors have been involved on both Adriatic and Ionian coastlines as well as on its bordering terrestrial surface and a wealth of knowledge, experiences, innovative practices, valuable outputs and results have been generated and must not be dispersed: indeed, they shall be taken into account and capitalised to progress in cooperation and achievements.

In this respect the ADRION Programme intends to consolidate the capital built by Interreg projects and Programmes with the objectives of:

- Making the knowledge and results generated by projects more accessible, thus improving transfer of knowledge;
- Obtaining additional results through benchmarking and detailed content analysis, building on existing knowledge and experience;

- Promoting the re-use and/or transfer of this knowledge and these results, in order to boost performance and delivery.
- Raising awareness and improving communication of results in specific fields of regional policy³.

This approach shall support the leading principles guiding ADRION implementation which can be summarised as follows:

- Effective **contribution of funded operations to Programme results** through the realization of **Programme outputs**;
- **Positive contribution to the needs and challenges in a transnational perspective** of the living conditions **in the ADRION area** (economic activities, quality of the environment, safety, etc.), **rather than highlighting on the needs of a limited number of partners**;
- **Support the exchange and transfer experiences** between regions, transnational interventions and capacity building, and **ensure that results are disseminated and used beyond Project Partners**;
- (Relevance of) **cohesion policy and capacity building as multiplier of prosperity and growth**;
- **Leverage for future initiatives and investments.**

6 Horizontal principles

Equality between men and women and non-discrimination

In addition to the thematic orientation, the ADRION Programme incorporates horizontal aspects highlighted in EU regulations, namely:

- **Equal opportunities and non-discrimination:**
Projects have to ensure that the activities implemented do not generate discrimination of any kind (sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation) and to explain how the equal opportunity principle is rooted in the project design and implementation. All projects, regardless the Priority Axis under which they are submitted, are encouraged to foresee measures or actions to promote equal opportunities and preventing any discrimination.
- **Equality between men and women:**
Projects have to ensure that the activities implemented are in line with the principle of equality between men and women and to demonstrate how this principle is rooted in the project design and implementation. This aspect applies to all projects, regardless the priority axis under which they are submitted.

Furthermore, specific cross-cutting issues will be addressed in all the Priority Axes contributing to the overall objectives of the Programme:

- Wide-spread take-up and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT);
- Social cohesion and social innovation;
- Promotion of data availability and knowledge management according to the “open data” principle;

³ Sources of inspirations can be found in the INTERACT database KEEP which collects information on project and partners of Territorial Cooperation www.keep.eu, Programmes projects portfolios and INTERACT thematic studies.

- Integrated territorial and eco-systemic approach⁴, i.e.: a way of making decisions in order to manage activities sustainably. It recognises that humans are part of the ecosystem and that their activities both affect the ecosystem and depend on it. The ecosystem approach requires:
 - An integrated approach that considers all ecosystem components (e.g. human activities, habitats and species, and physical processes).
 - Consideration of ecosystem functions and resulting ecosystem services.
 - Strong participation of stakeholders.

The projects to be supported shall practically demonstrate their contribution not only to the expected results, specific objectives, investment priorities, but should also be conceived, designed and implemented so that those horizontal principles are actually promoted and practically implemented (see Section 1 and Section 8 of the CP).

6.2 Sustainable development

ADRION Programme invites to promote eco-innovation, i.e.: aiming to make a more sustainable use of natural resources. More precisely, beneficiaries are requested to describe in their project proposals the efforts they will undertake to reduce the project's "carbon footprint".

In line with the principle of sustainable development:

- Projects which have a positive effect on the environment or which conserve, enhance or rehabilitate existing endowments will be preferred to those that are neutral from this perspective;
- Projects that have a potentially harmful effect on the environment will be excluded;
- Actions designed to raise environmental awareness and compliance both within the economic and administrative sectors, and among the general public, including acknowledgement that a high level of environmental performance can provide a long term competitive advantage will be encouraged.

Additionally, ADRION invites to implement actions/adopt specific measures to reduce the environmental impact. Indicatively, they can include:

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

⁴ The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) defines the ecosystem approach as "*a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way*". In the marine environment, ICES defines it as "*the comprehensive integrated management of human activities based on best available scientific knowledge about the ecosystem and its dynamics, in order to identify and take action on influences which are critical to the health of the marine ecosystems, thereby achieving sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services and maintenance of ecosystem integrity*".

7 State Aid compliance

Any public support granted by public funds must comply with State Aid rules applicable at the point of time when the public support is granted.

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.

In relation to the above, the presence of State Aid can be confirmed only if all the following 5 points (cumulative criteria) are fulfilled:

- 1) The measure must confer a benefit or advantage on the recipient which it would not otherwise have received (which is always the case for any Interreg Programme);
- 2) It must be granted by a EU Member State or through State resources (which is always the case for any Interreg Programme);
- 3) It must selectively favour certain undertakings or the production of certain goods;
- 4) It must distort or threaten to distort competition;
- 5) It must affect trade between EU Member States.

State Aid discipline applies to undertaking, i.e.: an entity engaged in an economic nature and which offers goods and services in competition (actual or potential) with other operators active in the market, carrying out activities of an economic nature, devoted to the production and marketing of goods and services in the market. The concept of undertaking is very wide and also includes all private and public firms and the entirety of what they produce. Activities carried out within the framework of statutory tasks normally performed by public authorities do not fall within the concept of an undertaking, in view of their non-business purposes and procedures.

In the evaluation of the existence of a potential State Aid issue, the nature of the beneficiary is therefore not relevant since, as said, even a not-profit organisation can be engaged in economic activities. The main element to take into account is the nature of the activities that the partner institution and the project intend to implement through the public funding⁵.

How to deal with State Aid

ADRION Programme shall treat State Aid relevant activities in accordance with the *de minimis* Regulation⁶ which foresees:

- The ceiling for the aid covered by the *de minimis* rule is EUR 200.000 (cash grant equivalent) over any three tax year period;

⁵Further information on State Aid can be found on the European Commission's DG Competition website: (http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/overview/index_en.html) where also comprehensive guidelines on the notion of State aid are available.

The INTERACT Programme has also summarised a list of questions and answers on this topic:
<http://www.interact-eu.net/library/qa-state-aid/pageflip>

⁶Regulation (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.

- The ceiling applies per EU Member State; in the case of ADRION Programme the aid will be considered as granted by Italy (location of the MA) and will cumulate with State Aid under *de minimis* regime granted by Italy;
- The ceiling will apply to the total of all public assistance considered to be *de minimis* aid. The ceiling applies to aid of all kinds, irrespective of the form it takes or the objective pursued.

The regulation only applies to “transparent” forms of aid, which means aid for which it is possible to determine in advance the gross grant equivalent without needing to undertake a risk assessment.

In case the grant would distort or threaten competition by favouring some Project Partners, the Programme shall identify possible measures and conditions the project will have to apply in order to minimize or annulling the State Aid relevance of the identified project activities/outputs. If this is not possible, the Programme shall adopt measures to ensure the respect of the *de minimis* rule.

Due to the specificities of ADRION Programme and to ensure equal treatment among all beneficiaries, the *de minimis* shall apply both to ERDF and IPA Project Partners.

Applicants are invited to check ADRION Programme web site for further information and may also consult the relevant national authorities to obtain more specific information on rules and limitations concerning State Aid.

8 The Programme language

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

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

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

**Thematic Focus on the calls devoted to Priority Axes 1 and 3
and financial allocation**

9 Third calls for proposals – thematic focus

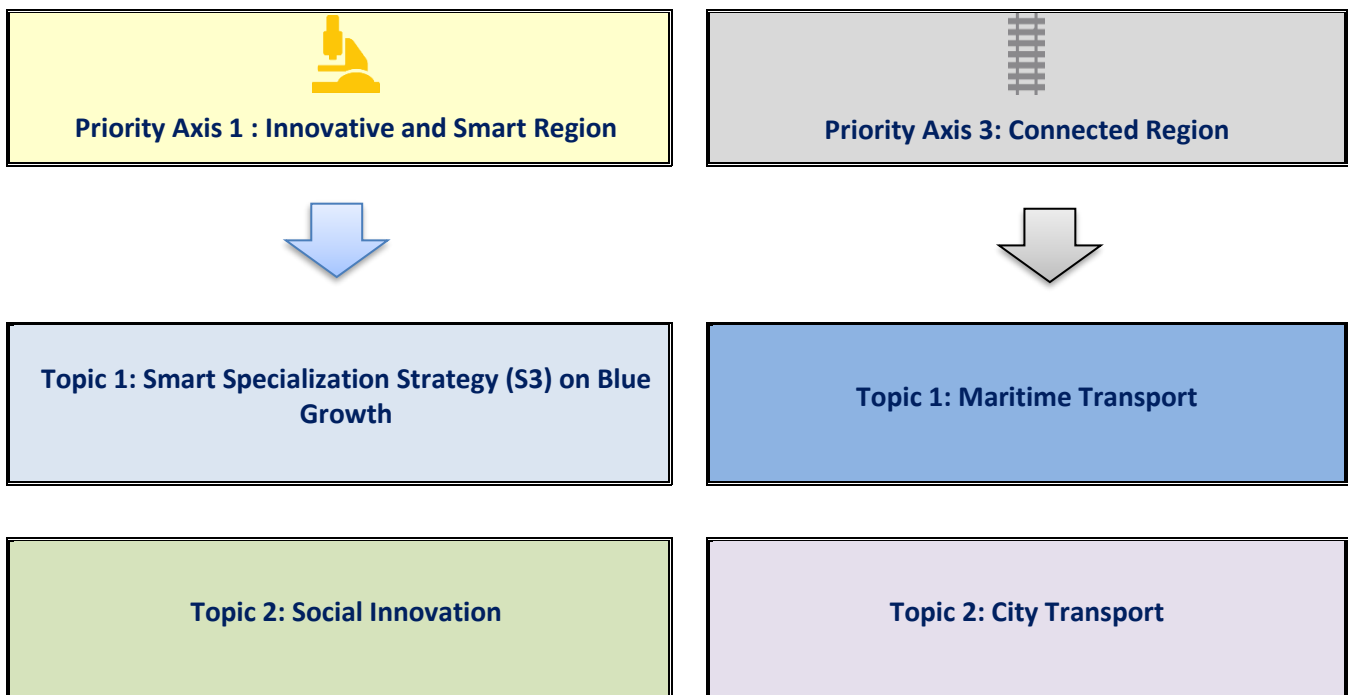
The methodology which brought to the identification of the topics of the third calls for proposals for Priority Axes 1 and 3 has matched the currently not funded topics of ADRION and the prioritized topics by EUSAIR.

The projects that will be funded in the framework of the calls shall likely contribute to the definition of topics and actions to be funded in the future programming period and are, therefore, of strategic relevance.

The following chapters provide specific information on the elements characterising each identified topic. Interested applicants are invited to read the following chapters in combination with the chapter “Procedure for submission and selection of project proposals” where general information on the structure of the application form and other technical indications are provided.

Projects to be funded in the framework of the calls for proposals addressed to Priority Axes 1 and 3 must refer only to one of the identified topics foreseen within the chosen Priority Axis (1 or 3).

Each project proposal must indicate only one topic of the selected call. The missing indication of the topic to which the project proposal refers to will bring to the exclusion of the project proposal (eligibility criterion)



9.1 Third call for proposals – Priority Axis 1 – indicative financial allocation

Priority Axis 1	ERDF	IPA ⁷	Total EU contribution	National contribution	Total funding (EU contribution. + national contribution)
Topic 1 – Blue Growth Smart Specialization	2.254.951,06	397.932,54	2.652.883,60	468.155,93	3.121.039,53
Topic 2 – Social innovation	2.254.951,06	397.932,54	2.652.883,60	468.155,93	3.121.039,53
TOTAL	4.509.902,12	795.865,08	5.305.767,20	936.311,86	6.242.079,06

9.2 Third call for proposals – Priority Axis 3 – indicative financial allocation

	ERDF	IPA	Total EU contribution	National contribution	Total funding (EU contribution. + national contribution)
Topic 1 – Maritime transport	2.644.112,40	503.106,13	3.147.218,53	555.391,50	3.702.610,03
Topic 2 – City transport	2.644.112,40	503.106,13	3.147.218,53	555.391,50	3.702.610,03
TOTAL	5.288.224,80	1.006.212,26	6.294.437,06	1.110.783,00	7.405.220,06

⁷ IPA amount includes overall EUR 267.585,94 ERDF funds in accordance with art. 20.2 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 and equally allocated to the two topics. Such ERDF funds shall be used by IPA beneficiaries for the implementation of activities in their countries.



Thematic Focus - Priority Axis 1 - Innovative and Smart Region

10 Topic 1: Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) on Blue Growth

10.1 Background information

*Blue Growth can be a driver for Europe's welfare and prosperity*⁸. This is the message of the Blue Growth strategy adopted by the European Commission (EC) in 2012. Blue Growth concept has been developed by EC to harness the untapped potentials of Europe's oceans and seas, creating more jobs and prosperity.

Blue Growth is seen as an innovative way to develop a range of maritime activities that are often dependent on each other, e.g. by relying on common skills and shared infrastructure.

The EC has pushed its policy for sustainable growth in the maritime economy, into 5 innovative, high-potential maritime sectors: energy, aquaculture, tourism, biotechnology and marine mineral resources. These five sectors have been selected for special attention as there was a limited understanding of the bottlenecks that prevented them from fulfilling their potentials⁹. Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) has become a crucial concept in EU regional development. It has been introduced in the context of the 2014-2020 programming period, as "*ex-ante conditionality*" within the context of Thematic Objective 1 – research and innovation. S3 is about developing new specialties to "maximise diversified specialisation to gain competitive advantage" through a dynamic approach, by focusing on modernisation and innovation of local value chains.

S3 is mainly supported through ESI FUNDS. Nevertheless, it has been retained important by several studies that regional systems should ensure a stronger planning and impact orientation, and a greater role of transnational and interregional cooperation through macro-regional strategies (e.g. Interreg, Vanguard initiatives). In addition, greater synergies are considered also possible between shared programming and EU-led funds (e.g. Horizon2020, COSME) that should be fully exploited by local initiatives by allowing experimentation¹⁰.

After the first phase of experimentation of S3 implementation, some common interest areas have emerged (i.e. energy, health and ICT, followed by agro-food, advanced materials, services/tourism, eco-innovation) and implementation will be mainly focused on R&I processes in SMEs, technology transfer and cluster support¹¹.

⁸ *Report on Blue Growth Strategy – Towards more sustainable growth and jobs in the blue economy – Commission Staff Working document – 31.3.2017*

⁹ *Ibidem*

¹⁰ *Blue Growth and Smart Specialization – How to catch maritime growth through "Value Nets" – S3 Policy Brief Series No.17 /2016 & The Role of Smart Specialisation in the EU Research & Innovation Policy Landscape - Dominique Foray, Kevin Morgan and Slavo Radosevic2 – EC –Regional and urban Policy – 3/2/2018;*

¹¹ *Blue Growth and Smart Specialization – How to catch maritime growth through "Value Nets" – S3 Policy Brief Series No.17 /2016*

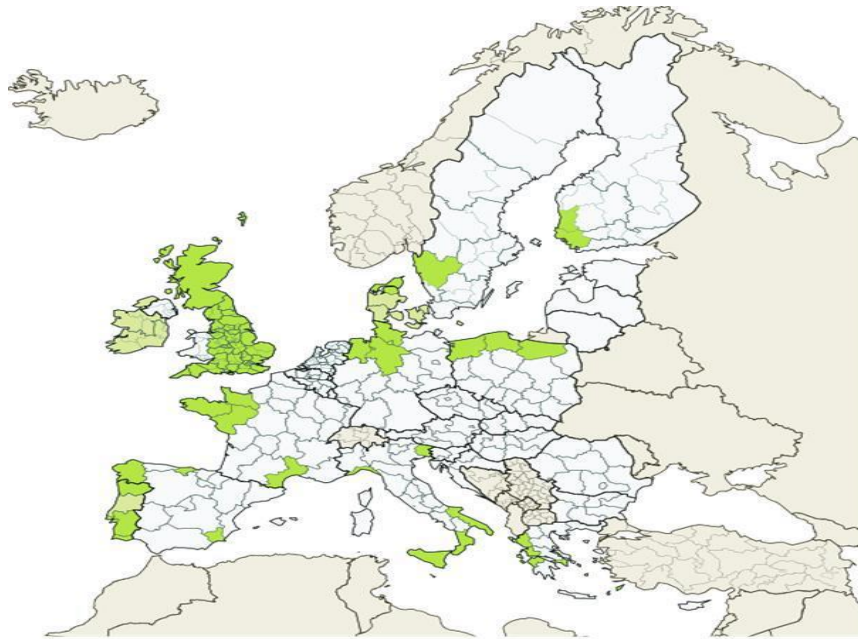


Figure 1.1 EU Regions, which have earmarked Blue Growth as a priority
 Source: Smart Specialisation Platform <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu>

In the framework of the S3, Blue Growth has been recognised as an EU priority, and embraced by over 50 regions all over EU (see Figure 1.1). In the ADRION programme area, Blue Growth has been selected only by a limited number of regions, mainly located in Italy and Greece (2016 data). However, it has been found that the involvement of regions varied significantly from one Member State to another. **It is worth to highlight that Blue Growth is not necessarily referred to as a Priority Axis, but that it is also an important underlying theme within a wide variety of Priority Axes, including those in the areas of Energy, Manufacturing, Tourism, Infrastructure, etc.**¹².

Even though S3 and Blue Growth concepts have been developed separately, they share many similarities. Both concepts embrace an integrated approach – going beyond sectors and silos. Blue Growth looks particularly at the links between broad ranges of maritime economic activities, and promotes synergies between them, whereas S3 takes an even wider perspective, as it allows for new initiatives and applications that can be injected into all existing economic activities. Both S3 and Blue Growth promote synergies between different economic activities. In doing so, both concepts embrace innovation and young firm creation. New and young enterprises, including spin-offs from academia are considered as the prime vehicles for economic transformation. They can disrupt existing economic activities, but also reinforce them, e.g. by strengthening existing production processes. Although Blue Growth has initially been developed at an EU-wide and conceptual level, this approach could only be successful after having been adopted and embraced by a broad variety of regions across the EU.

The principles of S3 are considered valuable for the implementation of Blue Growth as an integrated approach towards stimulating the maritime economy. The S3 agenda responds to the need for transformation and modernisation of the economy. It does so by exploring and exploiting (cross-cutting) niches of excellence, which requires integrated policy approaches.

The notion of S3 describes the capacity of an economic system to generate new specialisms through the use of existing resources. Maritime activities are not just economic sectors; they cover relevant maritime value

¹² *Blue Growth and Smart Specialization - How to catch maritime growth through “Value Net” - S3 Policy Brief Series - No.17/2016 - JRC Technical reports*


chains – including backward and forward linkages. This is important since large parts of the economic activities take place not in core sectors themselves, but in the adjacent economic activities.

S3 literature emphasizes the importance of the appropriate level of analysis, neither sectors nor individual companies, but rather activities or the “mid grained granularity”. Therefore, it is of higher importance that both S3 and Blue Growth pay considerable attention to value chain, allowing the assessment across the sectors and worldwide and pointing out where synergies and supply chain risks can occur.

It is also important to acknowledge that the supply chain is increasingly fragmented and internalized. Hence, it is difficult for any regional or even national jurisdiction to control them – as they can stretch out to other regions, countries and continents.

Based on that, ESI FUNDS should increasingly focus on a broad range of actions linked to improving the performance of regional innovation ecosystems (both in terms of institutional strength/governance, as well as specialization/diversification). ESI FUNDS should further embrace the emerging trends towards inter-regional collaboration and go beyond the existing Interreg format, expanding the existing initiatives like INNOSUP -01-2016-2017 cluster facilitated projects for new industrial value chains, and INNOSUP -08-2017, providing better access to industrial technologies developed overseas. Based on the experience of VANGUARD initiative, ESI FUNDS should facilitate bottom up initiatives of similar nature, but focused on downstream parts of the innovation value chain, which involve actors from both developed and less developed regions¹³.

S3 approach is considered as a key ingredient for the forward-looking evidence-based economic cooperation in the macro-region, as well as a facilitator of implementation of the innovation strategies across the macro-region and beyond.

	<p>With reference to the EUSAIR strategy, Blue Growth is one of its pillars and has identified three main topics on which concentrate its intervention in the area:</p> <p>Blue technologies; Fisheries and aquaculture, and Maritime and marine governance and services</p>
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Additionally, the representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, with the participation of a representative of the European Commission, in the framework of the second Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region declared in their Ioannina Declaration signed on 11 May 2017:

RECOGNISE the significant potential of the Blue Economy and, consequently, REAFFIRM their commitment to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors of the Adriatic and Ionian Region, by promoting sustainable growth and jobs through research, innovation and business opportunities in the blue economy.

¹³ *The Role of Smart Specialization in the EU Research and Innovation Policy Landscape - EC - Regional and Urban Policy*
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/smart/role_smartspecialisation_ri.pdf

10.2 Overall goal

The overall goal of the third call for proposal – Priority Axis 1 – S3 on Blue Growth - is to improve the capacities of public actors on innovation policies, strategies and actions for promoting and supporting the Blue Growth in the programme area through S3 on Blue Growth. This form of cooperation among ADRION regions and Partner States will enable the public actors to explore whether and to which extent S3 priorities currently being implemented and/or envisaged in national and/or regional strategies differ or complement each other to build a new one at transnational/macro-regional level.

10.3 Objectives

The project proposals shall focus on:

- The exploitation of potentials for transnational cooperation in supporting the implementation of a S3 on Blue Growth in the Adriatic Ionian area, focusing on topics/sectors of macro-regional interest;
- The establishing and/or enhancing linkages to support macro-regional S3 on Blue Growth in the Adriatic-Ionian area, with a particular focus on exchange of good practices towards relevant institutions of IPA Partner States.

10.4 Structure of the project proposal

In addition to the compulsory Work Packages (Management and Communication) indicated in paragraphs 23.4.1 and 23.4.2 of the present Manual, the **following activities are to be considered as compulsory:**

WPT1 – Mutual learning, good practices exchange and networking

- Identification of the best practices available on Blue Growth innovation policies;
- Organization of mutual learning processes on Blue Growth innovation policies;
- Organisation of learning/exchange/matchmaking events aiming at setting up open innovation mechanisms able to transfer innovative tools and practices into economic benefit for regional/national growth;
- Setting in place of a “transnational Blue Growth innovation community” based on a quadruple helix approach, taking stock of the initiatives already in place in the Adriatic-Ionian area.

WPT2 – Blue growth smart strategy development (at least three out of the following activities)

- Analysis of existing S3 dealing with blue growth in the Adriatic Ionian area (identification of existing gaps and constraints on innovation policies and actions for the Blue Growth at territorial and transnational level);
- Evaluation on how existing S3 dealing with Blue Growth in the different territories complement each other (building an evaluation framework for existing local innovation policies on Blue Growth capable to measure and compare their performances and assess their effectiveness) and elaboration of a road map to align them;
- Improvement and/or development of S3 strategies and action plans with a specific focus on Blue Growth;
- Identification of common challenges and creation of a strategic alliance to build a macro-regional S3 framework;

- Identification of the key common technology areas for innovation investment in Blue Growth to be taken into account in the next policy agenda (e.g. blue biotech, blue energy, aquaculture etc.).

The S3 macro-regional Strategy and Action Plan will allow taking advantage from the European regional diversities and developing strategies/action plans based on co-evolution and complementarity.

Synergies and connections with initiatives dealing with S3 and innovation in blue growth sectors (such as S3 platforms^[1], projects funded by ADRION or by other programmes like H2020, KIC RIS, Vanguard, HORIZON 2020 INNOSUP¹⁴) should be taken into account during the implementation of the project.

10.5 Expected results

- Common understanding among ADRION Partner States on the potential of transnational S3 on Blue Growth and fostering diffusion and uptake of innovation;
- Enhancement of the competencies/skills of the stakeholders and involved parties;
- Improvement of the framework conditions (awareness and foresight, legal, economic aspects, innovation governance, organisational issues, policy solutions, technology impact assessments);
- Mobilisation of stakeholders in the fields of research, innovation and utilisation in order to increase knowledge transfer between business, users, academia and administration actors (quadruple helix approach);
- Identification of emerging market opportunities in relation to the programme area competitive advantages, the fields of the EUSAIR and S3 of the regions in order to develop an ADRION “critical mass”;
- Better coordinated innovation policies and strategies e.g. at the Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) level.

Result Indicator

Level of capacity of key innovation actors to be effectively involved in transnational actions for the development of a regional Innovation system

Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General public; ▪ Local public authorities; ▪ Regional public authorities; ▪ National public authorities; ▪ Agencies; ▪ International Organisations; ▪ Research organisations; ▪ (Public) service providers;
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^[1] <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home>

¹⁴ INNOSUP-08-2017: A better access to industrial technologies developed overseas; INNOSUP-01-2016-2017: Cluster facilitated projects for new industrial value chains.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher education institutions; ▪ Education/training centres; ▪ Business support organisations; ▪ Interest groups including NGOs and cultural/citizen organisations ▪ Financial Institutions, Banks; ▪ Enterprises, including SME.
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10.6 Output indicators

Outputs are used to identify the direct products (outputs) of supported projects, which in turn contribute to result. Outputs indicators are used to measure them. Identified outputs are aimed at supporting the achievement of the desired change.

With reference to this call for proposals ADRION shall support the delivery of the following outputs:

- **Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions;**
- **Number of supported transnational cooperation networks;**
- **Number of strategies and action plans developed by transnational innovation networks and clusters.**

where:

The **number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions** must be understood as the number of small or medium size enterprises initiating, establishing or strengthening their cooperation with research institutions.

Networking structure: must be understood as the systematic establishment and management of internal and external links (communication, interaction, and co-ordination) between people, teams or organizations with a **long-term perspective in order to improve performance**.

Project must be aware that the Programme **does not support purely academic networks and pure research activities**.

Networks must be conceived as **innovative transnational networks**. The aim of the networks is to exchange information, knowledge and resources, to join efforts for implementing S3 in the area based on the quadruple helix approach.

The development of **strategies** and **action plans** must be focused on Blue Growth.

Strategy: must be understood as an integrated framework endorsed by all the project partners to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to the identified achievements. Strategies shall aim at policy integration in the area in the selected fields and act as policy drivers above the national level. The strategy must reflect the territorial needs and ensure its sustainability.

Action Plan: must be understood as a strategic document that precisely defines how the good practices will be implemented in the strategy/policy papers of each participating region/country.

Strategies /action plans can relate either to the development of new or further improvement, revision and/or update of existing strategies/policies/ action plans as well as their subsequent implementation. In the cases of further improvement or upgrades, the project must clearly demonstrate its added value for the area.

ADRION also foresees other outputs that must be taken into consideration within the project proposal only if captured by the previously explained programme output indicators:

Tool: must be understood as a specific instrument jointly implemented by the partnership to reach their predefined goal. It can be a physical tool (e.g.: a monitoring system) or a soft tool (e.g.: methods or services). They comprise amongst others analytical tools, management tools, technical tools, software tools, monitoring tools, decision support tools etc. To be effective, a tool must be tailored to end users' needs and the respective framework conditions and has to be comprehensive and durable. **Only tools captured by Programme output indicators must be taken into consideration** (examples of tools are: S3 stakeholders platform; open innovation platforms; ICT tools for allowing matchmaking or financing schemes etc.).

Pilot action: must be understood as testing, evaluating and/or demonstrating the feasibility, effectiveness and replicability in a transnational perspective. It must have an experimental or demonstration character. It can 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. **Only pilot actions captured by Programme output indicators must be taken into consideration** (examples of pilot actions are: pilot action plans related to the identified key common technology areas for innovation investment in Blue growth; strategies for coordination of the relevant S3 actors etc.).

Project proposals must contribute to the achievement of at least two of the aforementioned output indicators.

The project outputs must be in line with Programme outputs. **Projects outputs not aligned with the Programme aforementioned output indicators will not be positively evaluated.**

Finally, project outputs must be embedded into a **transnational context**. Projects cannot be considered transnational, if they consist only in a series of local actions thematically linked with each other but not supported by an effective joint cooperation.

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

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

10.7 Project Partnership

Entities acting as lead or project financing partners involved in the project proposal must be located in the ADRIAN Programme geographical area (see paragraph 3).

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

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

The project proposal must additionally ensure the presence of supporting actors according to the "quadruple helix" approach in the so called "*entrepreneurial discovery process*" for the design of S3. Public national or regional administrations should indicate in the project proposal the agreements already in place with other institutions (e.g.: universities, research bodies/institutions; technological parks etc.) that they intend to involve to maximise all existing know how and territorial cooperation. The presence of these agreements shall be thoroughly evaluated.

Project Partners should be involved already in the project drafting phase in order to incorporate ideas and contributions from all applicants and to ensure a high level of commitment to the project.

Applicants must demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the state of the art on Blue Growth in the Adriatic – Ionian area.

Please consider that the proposed partnerships' competence and relevance on the matter tackled by the topic will be carefully verified and assessed in the frame of project proposals' quality assessment, in order to guarantee the correct and successful implementation of the identified pattern of activities.

The minimum eligible partnership comprises **at least 6 financing Project Partners** directly contributing to the project implementation from 6 different Partner States, out of them:

- At least 4 financing Project Partners – including the Lead Applicant - from 4 different ERDF Partner States;
- At least 2 financing Project Partners from 2 different IPA Partner States.

The partnership can include up to a maximum of 2 financing Project Partners from the same Partner State.

The eligible partnership can consist of a **maximum of 16 financing Project Partners**.

Potential beneficiaries – regardless whether they apply for the role of Lead or Project Partners – **cannot be involved in more than one project proposal per call/Priority Axis.**

The potential beneficiaries will be identified on the basis of VAT or other national identified number, indicated in the B section of the Application Form. Lack of provision of the aforementioned information (VAT or other national identifying number) will bring to the rejection of the project proposal.

MA/JS reserve the right to verify the correctness of the provided information.

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

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

10.8 Eligible financing project partners

- Public authorities at **national or regional** level competent for the addressed topic (Blue Growth);
- Bodies governed by public law and public bodies competent for the addressed topic (Blue Growth) **on condition that the relevant competent public authority (i.e.: ministry, regional administration) is involved as Associated Partner within the same project proposal.**

The eligible financing partners listed above, competent for the addressed topic and interested in being part of a project proposal, must fulfil all the following criteria:

- **Established under the national law of one of the Partner States participating in the Programme.** Nationality will be determined on the basis of the organisation's statute/articles of incorporation which shall demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the internal law of a Partner State participating to the Programme. In this respect, any legal entity whose statute has been established under the national law of a country not participating to the Programme cannot be considered as an eligible financing partner, even if it has established branches/offices legally registered under the national law of a Partner State participating to the Programme;
- **Have their legal seat and their seat of operations in a Partner State/part of a Partner State included in the Programme area** (with the exceptions reported under the sub-paragraph “*Assimilated partners*”);
- Be endowed with **legal personality**.

In addition to what above, eligible financing partners shall be, according to their legal status:

- **National, regional public bodies;**
- **Bodies governed by public law** as defined in Article 2(4) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, i.e. bodies that have all of the following characteristics:
 - (a) They are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
 - (b) They have legal personality; and
 - (c) They are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

Participation of EGTC within the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, international organizations and private bodies/institutions is not allowed.

10.9 Assimilated partners

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

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

10.10 Associated partners

ADRION Programme foresees the involvement of *Associated Partners*, i.e.: those bodies willing to be involved in a project with an observer or associated status without financially contributing to the project. The associated institutions do not account for the partnership minimum requirements; all expenditure incurred by these bodies shall be finally borne by any of the institutions acting as financing partners in order to be considered as eligible. The associated institutions must not act as service providers in order not to enter in conflict with public procurement rules.

The partnership must demonstrate the benefits that the involved Associated Partner shall bring to the project and its follow up. Expenditure incurred by these bodies shall be limited to reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs related to their participation in project meetings.

Public authorities, bodies governed by public law and private entities (SMEs or their clusters), universities, research bodies/institutions, technological parks can be associated partners, on condition that their relevance for the addressed topic of the project proposal is sound and proven and reported both in their Declaration and in the relevant sections of the Application Form.

Associated partners can be located also outside the Programme geographical area.

10.11 Lead Applicant

According to art. 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 “where there are (two or) more beneficiaries of an operation in a cooperation Programme, one of them shall be designed by all the beneficiaries as lead beneficiary” (Lead Partner principle).

The Lead Applicant must be located in an ERDF Partner State.

The following bodies located in the ERDF Partner States shall be considered as eligible Lead Partners:

- National, regional public authorities;
- National, regional public bodies;
- Bodies governed by public law;
- Assimilated partners.

10.12 Common elements affecting all eligible financing partners

All financing partners must ensure that:

- They have adequate human and technical resources to ensure a sound project implementation and management;
- Their administrative involvement in the project does not undermine their daily activities;
- Their financial commitment within the project is adequate to their size and capacity;
- They have the 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 covered by project partners within the project is concerned, entities whose ordinary main scope of activities and whose role in the project consists mainly in project coordination, management, communication or knowledge management, shall not be positively assessed.** The involvement of such bodies in the project should be, instead, as external service providers to be contracted following the applicable public procurement procedures.

10.13 Project proposal financial size

Recommended maximum EU contribution for project proposals submitted in the framework of the present topic is **EUR 2.652.883,60**, out of which **EUR 2.254.951,06 (ERDF)** and **EUR 397.932,54 (IPA)**.

The EU co-financing rate shall be up to 85% of eligible expenditure both for ERDF and IPA II partners.

Priority Axis 1	ERDF	IPA ¹⁵	Total EU contribution	National contribution	Total funding (EU contribution).
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¹⁵ IPA amount includes overall EUR 133.792,97 ERDF funds in accordance with art. 20.2 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013. Such ERDF funds shall be used by IPA beneficiaries for the implementation of activities in their countries.

					+ national contribution)
Topic 1 – S3 on Blue Growth	2.254.951,06	397.932,54	2.652.883,60	468.155,93	3.121.039,53

EU Project Partners from Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia shall benefit from ERDF funds, Project Partners from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia shall benefit from IPA funds.

It is warmly recommended that the project budget follow the ratio between ERDF and IPA funds 85:15 as available in this Priority Axis of the Programme.

In case current IPA allocation reveals not enough, art. 20.2 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 could be further applied only for the benefit of partners located in IPA Partner States.

Due to the limited funds available, it is expected that only one project per topic will be funded.

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

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

10.14 Project duration

Up to a maximum of **30 months**.

11 Topic 2: Social innovation

11.1 Background information

In the recent years, the complexity of the social issues, and the decrease of public resources have provoked a reduction of the effectiveness of the public policy instruments traditionally adopted in the welfare area. For the same reason, the role of social economy and social innovation have prepared and equipped themselves to become alternative policy tools.

The term social innovation became more popular starting from 2000s, when the relation between the social and the economic spheres started to be more intertwined.

Since a universal definition has not been found yet, and being a relatively new and broad concept, social innovation can be defined in different ways, depending on the key elements identified as its main traits. The EC, for instance, defines social innovation as *“new ideas (products, services and models) that meet social needs more effectively than existing alternatives and that, at the same time, create new relationships and new collaborations. In other words, innovations that are good for society and that increase the possibilities of action for society itself”* (Robin Murray, Julie Caulier Grice and Geoff Mulgan "White Paper on Social Innovation", February 2013). According to this definition, social innovation can be interpreted as *“the products, services or new models which respond to the unmet needs of societies more effectively than the traditional approach”*, the beneficiaries of social innovation become the players of their own need-satisfaction since they are triggered and engaged in finding solutions and answers to their needs.

It can be stated that at the bottom of social innovation is the creation of **social value**, intended as systemic actions with effective impact on the society. Social problems cover a wide range of issues like poverty,

homelessness, unemployment, social exclusion, environmental degradation, therefore the creation of social value, whose benefits invest the whole society, has become an important policy priority. **Nowadays, the main tendency for public institutions, non-governmental organizations and corporations is to direct their funds to programs that create social value even if no common parameters and tools have been defined to describe and measure this social value in an univocal way. From here, an interesting topic on which to pay attention is already evident.**

Within the European Union, the Bureau of European Policy Advisors first investigated social innovation in 2009 and, in a short time, social innovation became an important issue of the European, National and Regional political agendas. Emerging social needs are now only partially solved by the public sector, as public resources have declined. In the shaping of welfare policies, public administrations maintain their addressing, monitoring and evaluating role, whereas the activities are demanded to the operators of social economy. Through the introduction of socially innovative approaches, public administrations and the social economy organizations demonstrate the possibility of aggregating needs and interests, increasing civic participation, generating employment and strengthening social cohesion. The combination of interests, institutions and ideas for the promotion of social innovation is embedded in wider political, technological and economic changes which affect the development of social innovation (*Social Innovation, A Decade of Changes*, European Commission 2014).

Government policies addressed to social innovation and social enterprise competitiveness at regional, national and transnational level in the ADRION area are fragmented and still too weak to deliver a concrete support.

In this framework of increasing importance given to social innovation, ADRION programme can contribute to put the basis for an integrated strategy in order to face nowadays challenges and emerging needs in terms of **social inclusion, poverty, migration, ageing people and equal opportunities focusing on the potential of social innovation.**

11.2 Overall goal

The overall goal of the third call for proposals – Priority Axis 1 – Social innovation - is aimed at contributing to the creation of a favourable ecosystem for social innovation in order to tackle in an integrated way the emerging needs and challenges of the area in terms of social inclusion, fight against poverty, migrants integration into society and labour market, demographic changes and ageing population.

11.3 Objectives

The project proposals shall focus on:

- The development and implementation of innovative social policies/tools aiming at the integration of marginalized communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups into the society and labour market;
- The fostering of social entrepreneurship through the development of skills and entrepreneurship competences;
- The enhancing of the cooperation among different actors dealing with social services of general interest.

11.4 Structure of the project proposal

In addition to the compulsory Work Packages (WP) Management and Communication indicated in paragraphs 23.4.1 and 23.4.2 of the present Manual, the following activities are to be considered as compulsory:

WPT1 – Methodological framework, assessment of the current situation and networking

- Assessment of societal changes in the Partner States involved (demographic changes; ageing population; unemployment or poverty issues affecting the society);
- Identification of the main challenges that need to be faced to address societal changes, with the aim to increase the regional competitiveness of the area and supporting social inclusion;
- Setting in place of a transnational community for social innovation of the area of all relevant actors, which will enhance the knowledge and capacities to deal with social innovation.

WPT2 – Best practices transfer and pilot actions development (at least two out of the following activities)

- Scouting of social innovation practices, services and tools in place in the different countries involved;
- Sharing of methodologies, approaches, experience and tools at transnational level and identification of best practices to be transferred;
- Testing of social innovation practices, services and schemes (e.g. new services for labour market orientation; mentoring; training on business development/ entrepreneurship skills etc.) for the integration of the marginalized groups in the labour market.

WPT3 – Development of innovative social policies/strategies and action plans to meet societal changes affecting the area (at least three out of the following activities)

- Setting in place common standards for the development of strategies and action plans related to social entrepreneurship aiming to create positive social effects in the area;
- Envisaging the introduction of incentives for the development of new social start-ups involving marginalized groups of the society;
- Developing innovative social policies/strategies and action plans that aim to overcome the actual obstacles in the current policy implementation and the new societal changes present in the area;
- Testing new ways of collaboration and coordination measures between different actors of the sector in order to tackle in an integrated way the needs of the marginalized communities;
- Enhancing the capacities of the public administrations to handle the new needs and challenges emerging in the area.

Synergies and connections with initiatives dealing with the addresses thematic (such as ESPON and INTERACT initiatives or projects funded by ADRION or by other programmes etc.) should be taken into account during the implementation of the project.

Expected results

- Common understanding among ADRION Partner States on the potential of transnational social innovation actions and fostering diffusion and uptake of innovation;
- Enhancement of the competencies/skills of the stakeholders and involved parties;
- Mobilisation of stakeholders in the fields of research, innovation and utilisation in order to increase knowledge transfer between business, users, academia and administration actors (quadruple helix approach);
- Better coordinated innovation policies and strategies.

Result Indicator

Level of capacity of key innovation actors to be effectively involved in transnational actions for the development of a regional Innovation system

Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ General public;▪ Local public authorities;▪ Regional public authorities;▪ National public authorities;▪ Agencies;▪ International Organisations;▪ Research organisations;▪ (Public) service providers;▪ Higher education institutions;▪ Education/training centres;▪ Business support organisations;▪ Interest groups including NGOs and cultural/citizen organisations▪ Financial Institutions, Banks;▪ Enterprises, including SME.
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11.5 Output indicators

Outputs are used to identify the direct products (outputs) of supported projects, which in turn contribute to result. Outputs indicators are used to measure them. Identified outputs are aimed at supporting the achievement of the desired change.

With reference to this call for proposals, ADRION shall support the delivery of the following outputs:

- **Number of supported transnational cooperation networks;**
- **Number of strategies and action plans developed by transnational innovation networks and clusters.**

where:

Networking structure: must be understood as the systematic establishment and management of internal and external links (communication, interaction, and co-ordination) between people, teams or organizations with a **long-term perspective in order to improve performance.**

Project must be aware that the Programme **does not support purely academic networks and pure research activities.**

Networks must be conceived as **innovative transnational networks.** The aim of the networks is to exchange information, knowledge and resources, to join efforts for implementing social innovation policies and practices; as well as develop the entrepreneurship competences, in order to create positive social effects.

The development of **strategies** and **action plans** must be focused on the social innovation for the integration of marginalized communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups into the society and labour market.

Strategy: must be understood as an integrated framework endorsed by all the project partners to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to the identified achievements. Strategies shall aim at policy integration in the area in the selected fields and act as policy drivers above the national level. The strategy must reflect the territorial needs and ensure its sustainability.

Action Plan: must be understood as a strategic document that precisely defines how the good practices will be implemented in the strategy/policy papers of each participating region/country.

Strategies /action plans can relate either to the development of new or further improvement, revision and/or update of existing strategies/policies/ action plans as well as their subsequent implementation. In the cases of further improvement or upgrades, the project must clearly demonstrate its added value for the area. *(examples are: transnational strategy to support the enhancement of the social entrepreneurship; national or regional strategies to foster innovation of social policies, taking into account the societal changes etc.).*

ADRION also foresees other outputs that must be foreseen within the project proposal only if captured by the previously explained programme output indicators:

Tool: must be understood as a specific instrument jointly implemented by the partnership to reach their predefined goal. It can be a physical tool (e.g.: a monitoring system) or a soft tool (e.g.: methods or services). They comprise amongst others analytical tools, management tools, technical tools, software tools, monitoring tools, decision support tools etc. To be effective, a tool must be tailored to end users' needs and the respective framework conditions and has to be comprehensive and durable. **Only tools contributing to the Programme output indicators must be taken into consideration.** Tools developed or implemented should focus **on social innovation practices** *(example of tools: social innovation labs established in the form of a transnational networks; ICT tools to support the schemes for integrating disable and vulnerable groups; innovative learning systems to enhance competences and increase enterprise cooperation with research institutions etc.)*

Pilot action: must be understood as testing, evaluating and/or demonstrating the feasibility, effectiveness and replicability in a transnational perspective. It must have an experimental or demonstration character. It can 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. **Only pilot actions contributing to the Programme output indicators must be taken into consideration** *(examples of pilot actions are: innovative services for labour market orientation delivered through transnational networks; pilot services for competence development of disadvantaged groups etc.).*

Project proposals must contribute to the achievement of at least two of the aforementioned output indicators.

The project outputs must be in line with Programme outputs. **Projects outputs not aligned with the Programme aforementioned output indicators shall not be positively evaluated.**

Finally, project outputs must be embedded into a **transnational context**. Projects cannot be considered transnational, if they consist only in a series of local actions thematically linked with each other but not supported by an effective joint cooperation.

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

The realization of these outputs shall have to be attested by adequate supporting documentation.

11.6 Project Partnership

Entities acting as lead or project financing partners involved in the project proposal must be located in the ADRION Programme geographical area (see paragraph 3).

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

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

Project Partners should be involved already in the project drafting phase in order to incorporate ideas and contributions from all applicants and to ensure a high level of commitment to the project.

Applicants must demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the state of the art social innovation in the Adriatic – Ionian area.

Please consider that the proposed partnerships' competence and relevance on the matter tackled by the topic will be carefully verified and assessed in the frame of project proposals' quality assessment, in order to guarantee the correct and successful implementation of the identified pattern of activities.

The minimum eligible partnership comprises **at least 6 financing Project Partners** directly contributing to the project implementation from 6 different Partner States, out of them:

- At least 4 financing Project Partners – including the Lead Applicant - from 4 different ERDF Partner States;
- At least 2 financing Project Partners from 2 different IPA Partner States.

The partnership can include up to a maximum of 2 financing Project Partners from the same Partner State.

The eligible partnership can consist of a **maximum of 16 financing Project Partners**.

Potential beneficiaries – regardless whether they apply for the role of Lead Applicant or Project Partners – **cannot be involved in more than one project proposal per call/Priority Axis.**

The potential beneficiaries will be identified on the basis of VAT or other national identified number, indicated in the B section of the Application Form. Lack of provision of the aforementioned information (VAT or other national identifying number) will bring to the rejection of the project proposal.

MA/JS reserve the right to verify the correctness of the provided information.

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

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

11.7 Eligible financing project partners

- Public authorities at **national or regional** level competent for the addressed topic (Social Innovation);
- Bodies governed by public law and public bodies competent for the addressed topic (Social Innovation) **on condition that the relevant competent public authority (i.e.: ministry, regional administration) must be involved as associated partner within the same project proposal.**

The eligible partners listed above, competent for the addressed topic and interested in being part of a project proposal, must fulfil all the following criteria:

- **Established under the national law of one of the Partner States participating in the Programme.** Nationality will be determined on the basis of the organisation's statute/articles of incorporation which shall demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the internal law of a Partner State participating to the Programme. In this respect, any legal entity whose statute has been established under the national law of a country not participating to the Programme cannot be considered as an eligible partner, even if it has established branches/offices legally registered under the national law of a Partner State participating to the Programme;
- **Have their legal seat and their seat of operations in a Partner State/part of a Partner State included in the Programme area** (with the exceptions reported under the sub-paragraph “*Assimilated partners*”);
- Be endowed with **legal personality**.

In addition to what above, eligible financing partners shall be, according to their legal status:

- **National, regional public bodies;**
- **Bodies governed by public law** as defined in Article 2(4) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, i.e. bodies that have all of the following characteristics:
 - (a) They are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
 - (b) They have legal personality; and
 - (c) They are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

Participation of EGTC within the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, international organizations and private bodies/institutions is not allowed.

11.8 Assimilated partners

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

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

11.9 Associated partners

ADRION Programme foresees the involvement of *Associated Partners*, i.e.: those bodies willing to be involved in a project with an observer or associated status without financially contributing to the project. The associated institutions do not account for the partnership minimum requirements; all expenditure incurred by these bodies shall be finally borne by any of the institutions acting as financing partners in order to be considered as eligible. The associated institutions must not act as service providers in order not to enter in conflict with public procurement rules.

The partnership must demonstrate the benefits that the involved Associated Partner shall bring to the project and its follow-up. Expenditure incurred by these bodies shall be limited to reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs related to their participation in project meetings.

Public authorities, bodies governed by public law and private entities, universities, research bodies/institutions, can be associated partners on condition that their relevance for the addressed topic of the project proposal is sound and proven and reported in the Declaration and relevant sections of the Application Form.

Associated partners can be located also outside the Programme geographical area.

11.10 Lead Applicant

According to art. 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 “*where there are (two or) more beneficiaries of an operation in a cooperation Programme, one of them shall be designed by all the beneficiaries as lead beneficiary*” (Lead Partner principle).

The Lead Applicant must be located in an ERDF Partner State.

The following bodies located in the ERDF Partner States shall be considered as eligible Lead Partners:

- National, regional public authorities;
- National, regional public bodies;
- Bodies governed by public law;
- Assimilated partners.

11.11 Common elements affecting all eligible financing partners

All financing partners must ensure that:

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

- They have the 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 covered by the project partners within the project is concerned, entities whose ordinary main scope of activities and whose role in the project consists mainly in project coordination, management, communication or knowledge management, shall not be positively assessed.** The involvement of such bodies in the project should be, instead, as external service providers to be contracted following the applicable public procurement procedures.

11.12 Project proposal financial size

Recommended maximum EU contribution for project proposals submitted within the present topic is **EUR 2.652.883,60**, out of which **EUR 2.254.951,06 (ERDF)** and **EUR 397.932,54 (IPA)**.

The EU co-financing rate shall be up to 85% of eligible expenditure both for ERDF and IPA II partners.

Priority Axis 1	ERDF	IPA¹⁶	Total EU contribution	National contribution	Total funding (EU contribution. + national contribution)
Topic 2 – Social Innovation	2.254.951,06	397.932,54	2.652.883,60	468.155,93	3.121.039,53

EU Project Partners from Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia shall benefit from ERDF funds, Project Partners from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia shall benefit from IPA funds.

It is warmly recommended that the project budget follow the ratio between ERDF and IPA funds 85:15 as available in this Priority Axis of the Programme.

In case current IPA allocation reveals not enough, art. 20.2 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 could further be applied only for the benefit of partners located in IPA Partner States.

Due to the limited funds available, it is expected that only one project per topic will be funded.

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

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

11.13 Project duration

Up to a maximum of **30 months**.

¹⁶ IPA amount includes overall EUR 133.792,97 ERDF funds in accordance with art. 20.2 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013. Such ERDF funds shall be used by IPA beneficiaries for the implementation of activities in their countries.




Thematic Focus - Priority Axis 3 – Connected Region

12 Topic 1: Maritime transport - Development of joint approaches and instruments in the field of maritime transport, such as a modern ship reporting system in the Adriatic Sea (Common Adriatic-Ionian Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information System ADRIREP), motorways of the sea and related ITS (Intelligent Transport System).

12.1 Background information

“The Adriatic and Ionian Seas represent the backbone of the Region, and its major asset. Maritime transport is an economic sector that could play a significant role in Adriatic and Ionian countries. During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the ports of the macro-region were unable to develop their container traffic to a significant extent, because of the Region being located on the fringe of Western Europe. Current trends of trade have increased the competitive position of the North Adriatic ports as natural gateways to Central and Eastern Europe. There is evidence that the North Adriatic ports could secure 6.0m TEU containers/year of traffic by 2030 (or 11.3% of the EU market); this would represent traffic growth of almost 350% over 20 years, provided good railway access is provided for the hinterland. In this context, development of maritime transport, in particular motorways of the sea as navigation corridors, is of paramount importance and must go hand-in-hand with the creation of modern and efficient intermodal ports integrating maritime transport with rail and road. Such an extension of infrastructure and transport activities must be accompanied by a coherent sustainable transport plan linked, inter alia, to an air quality plan under Directive 2008/50/EC. Investments in innovation and modernisation of infrastructure, reduction of procedural constraints and bureaucratic burden (especially in port operations) and promotion of safe maritime traffic should be given priority in the entire sea basin [...] Traffic monitoring and management are still an issue in the Region. The current ADRIREP (Adriatic Traffic Reporting system), a mandatory Ship Reporting System in the Adriatic Sea, is outdated and not fully serving its objectives. Significant improvements are still needed on harmonising the procedures, the data exchange and the national VTMISS (Vessel Traffic Management Information System) and on establishing mechanisms to enable maritime traffic information exchange between national VTMISS systems, also in view of including pre-accession countries in SafeSeaNet”¹⁷.

	<p>With reference to the EUSAIR strategy, Connecting the region is one of its pillars and among its topics it concentrates its intervention in the area also on:</p> <p>Maritime transport.</p>
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12.2 Overall goal

The overall goal of the third call for proposal – Priority Axis 3 – Maritime transport - is aimed at optimizing the efficiency of transport infrastructures of the Adriatic Ionian, in particular with regard to the Mandatory Ship Reporting System in force, adopted by IMO resolution MSC 139 (76) in 2002 (ADRIREP amendments), the Vessel Traffic Information Management (VTMISS) procedures harmonization, the inclusion of IPA countries in SafeSeaNet and National Single Windows (NSW) procedures and data exchange harmonization.

12.3 Objectives

The project proposal shall focus on:

¹⁷ EUSAIR Action Plan

- The update, integration and simplification of the existing ADRIREP - Adriatic Traffic Reporting system - for the Adriatic Ionian seas;
- The improvement and harmonization of the safety and efficiency of the navigation and of the procedures to exchange vessel traffic monitoring information among national VTMISS¹⁸ - Vessel Traffic Management Information system;
- The definition of joint training programmes for VTM - Vessel Traffic Monitoring - operators;
- The implementation of the SafeSeaNet¹⁹ and National Single Window (NSW) standards and procedures in the IPA countries.

12.4 Structure of the project proposal

In addition to the compulsory Work Packages (Management and Communication) indicated in paragraphs 23.4.1 and 23.4.2 of the present Manual, **the following activities are to be considered as compulsory:**

WP T1 Networking

- Setting up of a permanent governance structure (the Strategic Network), encompassing the maritime transport authorities and stakeholders, for the identification of existing obstacles/bottlenecks and potential for further improvement in the fields of VTMISS and data exchange platforms (National Single Window - NSW). The network is devoted to the standardisation of legal requirements and technical specifications in the field of intermodal transport investments and communication activities.

WP T2 Common developments in vessel traffic monitoring and management

- Definition of the amendment (simplification/ harmonisation) of ADRIREP in the Adriatic and Ionian seas procedures in order to reduce administrative burden and unnecessary duplication of data collected by VTMISS's in full compliance with the 2002/59/EC Directive, also considering the South East Mediterranean Motorway of the Sea of South-east Europe and submission of the proposal to IMO - International Maritime Organization - for approval;
- Definition of harmonised procedures to enhance safety and efficiency of navigation as well as exchange of vessel traffic information among national VTMISS's, with a view to implement a common VTMISS in the Adriatic-Ionian basin and include IPA Adriatic countries in SafeSeaNet²⁰. The work shall be based on the existing transnational data sharing platform MAREΣ - Mediterranean Automatic Identification System Regional Exchange Server hosted by Italy on behalf of EMSA – European Maritime Safety Agency.

¹⁸ VTMISS - Vessel Traffic Management Information system: a European vessel traffic monitoring and information system established in order to enhance maritime safety, port and maritime security, marine environment protection and efficiency of maritime traffic and maritime transport in EU waters

¹⁹ A European vessel traffic monitoring and information system established in order to enhance maritime safety, port and maritime security, marine environment protection and efficiency of maritime traffic and maritime transport in EU waters.

²⁰ SafeSeaNet is a vessel traffic monitoring and information system, established in order to enhance:

- Maritime safety
- Port and maritime security
- Marine environment protection
- Efficiency of maritime traffic and maritime transport

It has been set up as a network for maritime data exchange, linking together maritime authorities from across Europe. It enables European Union Member States, Norway, and Iceland, to provide and receive information on ships, ship movements, and hazardous cargoes.

WP T3 Training tools and methods for vessel traffic monitoring (VTM) operators

- Joint development of new training tools and methods for vessel traffic monitoring (VTM), including:
 - the analysis on VTM-related Vocational Education and Training (VET);
 - the identification of skills needs;
 - the design of specific new VET and life-long learning courses for VTM operators based on Learning outcomes in a European Qualification Framework (EQF) perspective;
 - the validation and certification of skills, based on learning outcomes and reference to EQF.

WP T4 Adriatic-Ionian common maritime single window platform concept

- The undertaking of joint harmonization policy measures and simplification actions aiming at the identification of operational procedures and technical options/standards for enabling interoperability and data exchange among existing National Single Windows (NSWs);
- The assessment of the maritime single window measures and procedures to-be-established in IPA Partner States.

12.5 Expected results

- Enhancement of the competencies/skills of the stakeholders and involved parties;
- Harmonised and/or joint infrastructures, tools and management structures;
- Enhancement of the maturity and coordination of investments in multimodal, environmental-friendly and low carbon transport and mobility infrastructures and services;
- Mobilisation of stakeholders in the field of vessel traffic monitoring and management;
- Improvement of the framework conditions of maritime security.

Result Indicator

Level of capacity of organisations in the field of transport and mobility to transnationally plan and implement sustainable and multimodal transport and mobility solutions.

Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ General public;▪ Local public authorities;▪ Regional public authorities;▪ National public authorities;▪ Agencies;▪ International Organisations;▪ Research organisations;▪ (Public) service providers;▪ Higher education institutions;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education/training centres; ▪ Business support organisations; ▪ Interest groups including NGOs and cultural/citizen organisations ▪ Financial Institutions, Banks; ▪ Enterprises, including SME.
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12.6 Output indicators

Outputs are used to identify the direct products (outputs) of supported projects, which in turn contribute to result. Outputs indicators are used to measure them. Identified outputs are aimed at supporting the achievement of the desired change.

With reference to this call for proposals, ADRION shall support the delivery of the following outputs:

- **Number of supported transnational cooperation networks in the field of environment-friendly and low carbon systems;**
- **Number of strategies and action plans developed in the field of environment-friendly and low carbon systems.**

where:

Networking structure: must be understood as the systematic establishment and management of internal and external links (communication, interaction, and co-ordination) between people, teams or organizations with a **long-term perspective in order to improve performance**. The Programme does not support purely academic networks.

Strategy: must be understood as an integrated framework endorsed by all the project partners to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to the identified achievements. Strategies shall aim at policy integration in the area in the selected fields and act as policy drivers above the national level. The strategy must reflect the territorial needs and ensure its sustainability.

Action Plan: must be understood as a strategic document that precisely defines how the good practices will be implemented in the strategy/policy papers of each participating region/country.

Strategies /action plans can relate either to the development of new or further improvement, revision and/or update of existing strategies/policies/ action plans as well as their subsequent implementation. In the cases of further improvement or upgrades, the project must clearly demonstrate its added value for the area.

Project proposals must contribute to the achievement of at least two of the aforementioned output indicators.

The project outputs must be in line with Programme outputs. **Projects outputs not aligned with the Programme aforementioned output indicators will not be positively evaluated.**

Finally, project outputs must be embedded into a **transnational context**. Projects cannot be considered transnational, if they consist only in a series of local actions thematically linked with each other but not supported by an effective joint cooperation.

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

The realization of these outputs shall have to be attested by adequate supporting documentation.

12.7 Project Partnership

Entities acting as lead or project financing partners involved in the project proposal must be located in the ADRION Programme geographical area (see paragraph 3).

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

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

Project Partners should be involved already in the project drafting phase in order to incorporate ideas and contributions from all applicants and to ensure a high level of commitment to the project.

Applicants must demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the state of the art on modern ship reporting system in maritime transport in the Adriatic – Ionian area.

Please consider that the proposed partnerships' competence and relevance on the matter tackled by the topic will be carefully verified and assessed in the frame of project proposals' quality assessment, in order to guarantee the correct and successful implementation of the identified pattern of activities.

The minimum eligible financing partnership comprises **at least 6 financing Project Partners** directly contributing to the project implementation from 6 different Partner States, out of them:

- At least 4 financing Project Partners – including the Lead Partner - from 4 different ERDF Partner States;
- At least 2 financing Project Partners from 2 different IPA Partner States.

The partnership can include up to a maximum of 2 financing Project Partners from the same Partner State.

The eligible partnership can consist of a **maximum of 16 financing Project Partners**.

Potential beneficiaries – regardless whether they apply for the role of Lead or Project Partners – **cannot be involved in more than one project proposal per call/Priority Axis.**

The potential beneficiaries will be identified on the bases of VAT or other national identified number, indicated in the B section of the Application Form. Lack of provision of the aforementioned information (VAT or other national identifying number) will bring to the rejection of the project proposal.

MA/JS reserve the right to verify the correctness of the provided information.

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

If, for whatever reason, two or more financing Project Partners are declared ineligible, the entire project proposal will be rejected.

12.8 Eligible financing project partners

- Public authorities at **national, regional** level competent for the addressed topic;
- Bodies governed by public law and public bodies competent for the addressed topic (Maritime Surveillance) **on condition that the relevant competent public authority (i.e.: ministry, regional administration) is involved as associated partner within the same project proposal.**

The eligible financing partners listed above, competent for the addressed topic and interested in being part of a project proposal, must fulfil all the following criteria:

- **Established under the national law of one of the Partner States participating in the Programme.** Nationality will be determined on the basis of the organisation's statute/articles of incorporation which shall demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the internal law of a Partner State participating to the Programme. In this respect, any legal entity whose statute has been established under the national law of a country not participating to the Programme cannot be considered as an eligible partner, even if it has established branches/offices legally registered under the national law of a Partner State participating to the Programme;
- **Have their legal seat and their seat of operations in a Partner State/part of a Partner State included in the Programme area** (with the exceptions reported under the sub-paragraph “*Assimilated partners*”);
- Be endowed with **legal personality**.

In addition to what above, eligible financing partners shall be, according to their legal status:

- **National, regional public bodies;**
- **Bodies governed by public law**, as defined in Article 2(4) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, i.e. bodies that have all of the following characteristics:
 - (a) They are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
 - (b) They have legal personality;
 - (c) They are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

Participation of EGTC within the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, international organizations and private bodies/institutions is not allowed.

12.9 Assimilated partners

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

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

12.10 Associated partners

ADRION Programme foresees the involvement of *Associated Partners*, i.e.: those bodies willing to be involved in a project with an observer or associated status without financially contributing to the project. The associated institutions do not account for the partnership minimum requirements; all expenditure incurred by these bodies shall be finally borne by any of the institutions acting as financing partners in order to be

considered as eligible. The associated institutions must not act as service providers in order not to enter in conflict with public procurement rules.

Associated partners can be located also outside the Programme geographical area.

The partnership must demonstrate the benefits that the involved Associated Partner shall bring to the project and its follow-up. Expenditure incurred by these bodies shall be limited to reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs related to their participation in project meetings.

Public authorities, bodies governed by public law and private entities can be associated partners, on condition that their relevance for the addressed topic of the project proposal is sound and proven, and reported in the Declarations and relevant sections of the Application Form.

12.11 Lead Applicant

According to art. 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 *“where there are (two or) more beneficiaries of an operation in a cooperation Programme, one of them shall be designed by all the beneficiaries as lead beneficiary”* (Lead Partner principle).

The Lead Applicant must be located in an ERDF Partner State.

The following bodies located in the ERDF Partner States shall be considered as eligible Lead Partners:

- National, regional public authorities;
- National, regional public bodies;
- Bodies governed by public law;
- Assimilated partners.

12.12 Common elements affecting all eligible financing partners

All financing partners must ensure that:

- They have adequate human and technical resources to ensure a sound project implementation and management;
- Their administrative involvement in the project does not undermine their daily activities;
- Their financial commitment within the project is adequate to their size and capacity;
- They have the 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 covered by project partners within the project is concerned, entities whose ordinary main scope of activities and whose role in the project consists mainly in project coordination, management, communication or knowledge management, shall not be positively assessed.** The involvement of such bodies in the project should be, instead, as external service providers to be contracted following the applicable public procurement procedures.

12.13 Project partner financial size

Recommended maximum EU contribution for project proposals submitted within the present topic is **3.147.218,52 EUR**, out of which **2.644.112,40 EUR (ERDF)** and **503.106,13 EUR (IPA)**.

The EU co-financing rate shall be up to 85% of eligible expenditure both for ERDF and IPA II partners.

	ERDF	IPA	Total EU contribution	National contribution	Total funding (EU contribution. + national contribution)
Topic 1 – Maritime transport	2.644.112,40	503.106,13	3.147.218,53	555.391,50	3.702.610,03

EU Project Partners from Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia shall benefit from ERDF funds, Project Partners from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia shall benefit from IPA funds.

It is warmly recommended that the project budget follow the ratio between ERDF and IPA funds of 85:15 as available in this Priority Axis of the Programme.

Due to the limited funds available, it is expected that only one project per topic will be funded.

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

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

12.14 Project duration

Up to a maximum of **30 months**.

13 Topic 2: City transport - Capitalization of technology innovation applied to integrated environmental-friendly and multimodal mobility services/structures addressed to cities and functional urban areas.

13.1 Background information

According to EUSAIR Action Plan, “supporting and efficient and sustainable transport connections, capable of coping effectively with increased traffic flows, creating attractiveness, both for foreign direct investments and for tourism, hence jobs and prosperity”²¹ is a priority for the Adriatic Ionian region.

It also reflects the recommendations from the EC²² related to:

- Decarbonisation and transition towards zero-emission mobility;
- New mobility concepts such as car-sharing;
- Innovative mobility services, among which car or bicycle sharing services, smartphone applications offering real-time analytics and data on traffic conditions;
- Multimodal travel information services.

The topic of the present call for proposals intends to narrow down the area of intervention focusing on city transport, namely:

- Support cities’ efforts in tackling the challenges posed by climate change, congestion and air pollution;
- Exchange and capitalization of innovative ICT based experiences (excluding communication and information like tools/apps, etc.) matured in the framework of multimodal transport and multimodal travel information services;
- Offer a range of mobility options, including bicycle and car-sharing schemes.

13.2 Overall goal

The overall goal of the third call for proposals – Priority Axis 3 – City transport, is aimed at contributing the reviewing of individual and public transport in accordance with the current changes on demography. According to the EC, the European Union is facing unprecedented demographic changes (ageing population, low birth rates, changing family structures and migration); such challenges affect the IPA countries as well. Taking advantage from the opportunity offered by the electro-mobility and the shared mobility revolution, the present call for proposals intends to contribute to the creation and testing of an integrated innovative planning tools for a sustainable city mobility solution in the Adriatic-Ionian region, forecasting future demand for public city transport due to demographic change.

The topic of the present call focuses on:

- Car ownership and individual transport

Car ownership rates increased significantly during the 70s along with low fuel prices and contributing to urban sprawl but flattened and declined in some cases during the 90s, coinciding with almost reached saturation point. Nowadays, the advent of electro-mobility and the diffusion of (affordable and access-to

²¹ SWD (2014) 190 final of 17 June 2014: Action Plan – Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region.

²² Europe on the Move – an agenda for a socially fair transition towards clean, competitive, and connected mobility for all - COM (2017) 283 final.

-all) sharing mobility systems do create the conditions for changes in lifestyle and may lead to a possible reduction of car ownership and a shift to more sustainable modes of transport, in the next decades.

- **Collective transport**

The observed trends of re-urbanization and consumers' increased preference for walkable neighbourhoods will probably slow down the urban sprawl trends and reduce car dependency. People living in urbanized areas are provided with several public transport and car sharing options to satisfy their mobility needs, and slow mobility (walking and cycling) is gaining increasing attention. In the long-term, mobility patterns will inevitably change and people will be relying more and more on public transport, particularly aged population and those with reduced driving capability.

Taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the electro-mobility and the share mobility revolution, bearing in mind the socio-demographic changes we have been facing, the overall goal aims at the creation and testing of an integrated innovative planning tool for a sustainable city mobility solution in the Adriatic-Ionian region, forecasting future demand for public city transport due to demographic change.

13.3 Objectives

The project proposals shall focus on:

- The development of innovative approaches to improve sustainable clean city mobility systems;
- The identification of city transport policies better suiting changing mobility needs;
- The promotion of citizens' active involvement in the development of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) in ADRION cities;
- The transnational cooperation between public authorities and their transport entities to improve multimodal and low carbon mobility and environmental quality.

13.4 Structure of the project proposal

In addition to the compulsory Work Packages (WP) Management and Communication indicated in paragraphs 23.4.1 and 23.4.2 of the present Manual, the following activities are to be considered as compulsory:

WP T1 Methodological framework and assessment

- Creation and implementation of living labs involving as forms of participatory governance institutions, stakeholders and citizens according to the quadruple helix approach (e.g.: research institutions, trade and business operators, citizens/civil society and commuters, local authorities) for the identification of measures of low-carbon city transport dialoguing via exchanging knowledge platform.

WP T2 Identification of innovative business tool supporting innovation and implementation of different Pilot action (at least one pilot action per each involved metropolitan area)

- Improvement of pedestrian traffic;
- Implementation of clean public transport;

- Creation of green safe bicycle routes;
- Setting up of share biking public (private/public) services;
- Setting up of car sharing public (private/public) services;
- Governance and management of high congested roads;
- Integrated ticketing and tariff schemes;
- Transnational social media-based competition for identification of fresh ideas for sustainable city transport services.

WP T3 Creation of a transnational strategy devoted to policymakers and planners for revision of transport policies for a more sustainable, integrated, accessible and harmonized mobility system.

- Identification of a shared strategy and its application at policy level.

13.5 Expected results

- Common understanding among ADRION Partner States of the “status quo” and the potentials for multimodal, environmental-friendly and low carbon transport and mobility infrastructures and services in the Adriatic-Ionian area;
- Enhancement of the competencies/skills of the stakeholders and involved parties;
- Increasing in the implementation options for multimodal, environmental-friendly and low carbon transport and mobility infrastructures and services;
- Enhanced involvement of tourism actors, residents and economic operators for investment in multimodal, environmental-friendly and low carbon transport and mobility infrastructures and services;
- Harmonised and/or joint infrastructures, tools and management structures;
- Enhancement of the maturity and coordination of investments in multimodal, environmental-friendly and low carbon transport and mobility infrastructures and services.

Result Indicator

Level of capacity of organisations in the field of transport and mobility to transnationally plan and implement sustainable and multimodal transport and mobility solutions.

Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General public; ▪ Local public authorities; ▪ Regional public authorities; ▪ National public authorities; ▪ Agencies; ▪ International Organisations; ▪ Research organisations;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ (Public) service providers; ▪ Higher education institutions; ▪ Education/training centres; ▪ Business support organisations; ▪ Interest groups including NGOs and cultural/citizen organisations ▪ Financial Institutions, Banks; ▪ Enterprises, including SME.
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13.6 Output indicators

Outputs are used to identify the direct products (outputs) of supported projects, which in turn contribute to result. Outputs indicators are used to measure them. Identified outputs are aimed at supporting the achievement of the desired change.

With reference to this call for proposals, ADRION shall support the delivery of the following outputs:

- **Number of supported transnational cooperation networks in the field of environment-friendly and low carbon systems;**
- **Number of strategies and action plans developed in the field of environment-friendly and low carbon systems.**

where:

Networking structure: must be understood as the systematic establishment and management of internal and external links (communication, interaction, and co-ordination) between people, teams or organizations with a **long-term perspective in order to improve performance**. The Programme does not support purely academic networks.

Strategy: must be understood as an integrated framework endorsed by all the Project Partners to address common challenges faced by a defined geographical area, which thereby benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to the identified achievements. Strategies shall aim at policy integration in the area in the selected fields and act as policy drivers above the national level. The strategy must reflect the territorial needs and ensure its sustainability.

Action Plan: must be understood as a strategic document that precisely defines how the good practices will be implemented in the strategy/policy papers of each participating region/country.

Strategies /action plans can relate either to the development of new or further improvement, revision and/or update of existing strategies/policies/ action plans as well as their subsequent implementation. In the cases of further improvement or upgrades, the project must clearly demonstrate its added value for the area.

Project proposals must contribute to the achievement of at least two of the aforementioned output indicators.

The project outputs must be in line with Programme outputs. **Projects outputs not aligned with the Programme aforementioned output indicators will not be positively evaluated.**

Finally, project outputs must be embedded into a **transnational context**. Projects cannot be considered transnational, if they consist only in a series of local actions thematically linked with each other but not supported by an effective joint cooperation.

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

The realization of these outputs shall have to be attested by adequate supporting documentation.

The topic does not support mere research activities.

13.7 Project Partnership

Entities acting as lead or project financing partners involved in the project proposal must be located in the ADRION Programme geographical area (see paragraph 3).

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

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

Project Partners should be involved already in the project drafting phase in order to incorporate ideas and contributions from all applicants and to ensure a high level of commitment to the project.

Applicants must demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the state of the art on city transport in the Adriatic – Ionian area.

Please consider that the proposed partnerships' competence and relevance on the matter tackled by the topic will be carefully verified and assessed in the frame of project proposals' quality assessment, in order to guarantee the correct and successful implementation of the identified pattern of activities.

The minimum eligible partnership comprises **at least 6 financing Project Partners** directly contributing to the project implementation from 6 different Partner States, out of them:

- At least 4 financing Project Partners – including the Lead Applicant - from 4 different ERDF Partner States;
- At least 2 financing Project Partners from 2 different IPA Partner States.

The partnership can include up to a maximum of 2 financing Project Partners from the same Partner State.

The eligible financing partnership can consist of a **maximum of 16 financing Project Partners**.

Potential beneficiaries – regardless whether they apply for the role of Lead or Project Partners – **cannot be involved in more than one project proposal per call/Priority Axis.**

The potential beneficiaries will be identified on the bases of VAT or other national identified number, indicated in the B section of the Application Form. Lack of provision of the aforementioned information (VAT or other national identifying number) will bring to the rejection of the project proposal.

MA/JS reserve the right to verify the correctness of the provided information.

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

If, for whatever reason, two or more financing Project Partners are declared ineligible, the entire project proposal will be rejected.

13.8 Eligible financing project partners

In consideration of the pattern of activities of the present topic 2 (reference to Work Package – WP - WPT2 - Pilot actions) and in order to guarantee sound feasibility and a prompt readiness of their implementation, each eligible metropolitan area (ref. to list of eligible metropolitan areas), interested in being part of the project proposal, **MUST** take part with:

at least 1 public authority, identified at **national, regional, local level, and their associations**, representative **of the eligible metropolitan areas** and competent in the matter of urban transport and able to guarantee the availability of the necessary permissions, if necessary, for the implementation of the pilot actions.

Participation is also open to:

bodies governed by public law and public bodies competent for the addressed topic (city transport) **on condition that the relevant competent public authority** identified at **national, regional, local level, and their associations**, representative of the eligible metropolitan areas, is involved as Lead Applicant/Project Partner within the same project proposal.

The eligible applicants listed above, competent for the addressed topic and interested in being part of a project proposal, must fulfil all the following criteria:

- **Established under the national law of one of the Partner States participating in the Programme.** Nationality will be determined on the basis of the organisation's statute/articles of incorporation which shall demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the internal law of a Partner State participating to the Programme. In this respect, any legal entity whose statute has been established under the national law of a country not participating to the Programme cannot be considered as an eligible partner, even if it has established branches/offices legally registered under the national law of a Partner State participating to the Programme;
- **In case of national and regional bodies: have their legal seat and their seat of operations in a Partner State/part of a Partner State included in the Programme area** (with the exceptions reported under the sub-paragraph "*Assimilated partners*");
- **In case of local bodies: have their legal seat and their seat of operations in the eligible metropolitan areas** (ref. to list of eligible metropolitan areas);
- Be endowed with **legal personality**.

In addition to what above, eligible financing partners shall be, according to their legal status:

- **National, regional, local public bodies** and associations formed by several of such public bodies;
- **Bodies governed by public law**, and associations constituted by several bodies governed by public law, as defined in Article 2(4) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, i.e. bodies that have all of the following characteristics:
 - (a) They are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
 - (b) They have legal personality;
 - (c) They are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

Participation of EGTC within the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, international organizations and private bodies/institutions is not allowed.

13.9 Eligible metropolitan areas

Please find below the list of metropolitan areas, identified for each ADRION Partner State, where the project MUST be implemented.

Each eligible metropolitan area must be involved in one project proposal only, whose identification shall be based on the methodology reported in paragraph 13.7.

ADRION Partner State	Eligible metropolitan areas
ITALY	Milan, Palermo, Bologna, Bari, Catania, Venezia, Verona, Bergamo, Taranto, Brescia, Parma, Reggio Emilia, Messina, Padova, Trieste, Ancona, Campobasso, Reggio Calabria, Catanzaro
SLOVENIA	Ljubljana, Maribor
CROATIA	Zagreb, Split, Rijeka, Osijek
GREECE	Athens, Thessaloniki, Patra, Heraklion, Piraeus, Larissa, Volos, Alexandroupoli, Corfu, Ioannina, Rhodes, Mytilene
ALBANIA	Tirana, Durres
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Tuzla, Zenica
MONTENEGRO	Podgorica, Ulcinj, Bar, Budva, Tivat, Kotor, Herceg Novi
SERBIA	Belgrade, Novi Sad

13.10 Assimilated partners

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

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

13.11 Associated partners

ADRION Programme foresees the involvement of *Associated Partners*, i.e.: those bodies willing to be involved in a project with an observer or associated status without financially contributing to the project. The associated institutions do not account for the partnership minimum requirements; all expenditure incurred by these bodies shall be finally borne by any of the institutions acting as financing partners in order to be considered as eligible. The associated institutions must not act as service providers in order not to enter in conflict with public procurement rules.

The partnership must demonstrate the benefits that the involved Associated Partner shall bring to the project and its follow up. Expenditure incurred by these bodies shall be limited to reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs related to their participation in project meetings.

Public authorities, bodies governed by public law and private entities, can be associated partners on condition that their relevance for the addressed topic of the project proposal is sound, proven and reported in the Declaration and in the related sections of the Application Form.

Associated partners can be located also outside the Programme geographical area.

13.12 Lead Applicant

According to art. 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 “*where there are (two or) more beneficiaries of an operation in a cooperation Programme, one of them shall be designed by all the beneficiaries as lead beneficiary*” (Lead Partner principle).

The Lead Applicant must be located in an ERDF Partner state

The following bodies located in the ERDF Partner States shall be considered as eligible Lead Partners:

- National, regional, local public authorities, including associations formed by several national, regional, local public authorities;
- National, regional, local public bodies, including associations formed by several national, regional or local bodies;
- Bodies governed by public law, including associations formed by several bodies governed by public law;
- Assimilated partners.

13.13 Common elements affecting all eligible financing partners

All financing partners must ensure that:

- They have adequate human and technical resources to ensure a sound project implementation and management;
- Their administrative involvement in the project does not undermine their daily activities;
- Their financial commitment within the project is adequate to their size and capacity;
- They have the 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 covered by the project partners within the project is concerned, entities whose ordinary main scope of activities and whose role in the project consists mainly in project coordination, management, communication or knowledge management, shall not be positively assessed.** The involvement of such bodies in the project should be, instead, as external service providers to be contracted following the applicable public procurement procedures.

13.14 Project proposal financial size

Recommended maximum EU contribution for project proposals submitted within the present topic is **3.147.218,52 EUR**, out of which **2.644.112,40 EUR (ERDF)** and **503.106,13 EUR (IPA)**.

The EU co-financing rate shall be up to 85% of eligible expenditure both for ERDF and IPA II partners.

	ERDF	IPA	Total EU contribution	National contribution	Total funding (EU contribution. + national contribution)
Topic 2 – City transport	2.644.112,40	503.106,13	3.147.218,53	555.391,50	3.702.610,03

EU Project Partners from Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia shall benefit from ERDF funds, Project Partners from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia shall benefit from IPA funds.

It is warmly recommended that the project budget follow the ratio between ERDF and IPA funds of 85:15 as available in this Priority Axis of the Programme.

Due to the limited funds available, it is expected that only one project per topic will be funded.

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

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

13.15 Project duration

Up to a maximum of **30 months**.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AFFECTING ALL FINANCING PARTNERS

14 Project Partners' obligations

Obligations of the Lead Applicants and project partners are laid down in the subsidy contract and in the partnership agreement respectively.

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

The Partnership Agreement transfers rights and responsibilities from the Lead Partner to the Project Partners.

Templates of these two legal documents in force for the previous calls are available on ADRION web site.

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

Lead Partner responsibility

The partner designated by all beneficiaries to act as lead beneficiary (art. 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2014) assumes the following main responsibilities:

- a) Is 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 Joint Secretariat (JS) will address to it;
- b) Signs a subsidy contract on behalf of the entire partnership with the MA;
- c) Ensures arrangements with the other partners comprising provisions able to guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the project and arrangements for recovering the amounts unduly paid;
- d) Assumes the responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the entire operation; in this respect it sets the coordination structure through the appointment of key figures (e.g.: a project coordinator, a financial coordinator and a communication manager) operating for the entire partnership;
- e) Ensures that expenditure presented by all partners has been incurred in implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the beneficiaries, and is in accordance with the subsidy contract;
- f) Ensures that the expenditure presented by all partners has been verified by the controllers appointed by the country where the partner is located according to the specificities of the national system;
- g) Ensures that the promised outputs as in the approved project proposal are delivered in accordance with the set timeline;
- h) Receives the reimbursed amount from the Programme on behalf of the entire partnership and transfers the due amounts to its partners as soon as possible without deducting any amount or specific charge;
- i) Guarantees 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 partner(s) (itself or project partner);
- j) Ensures that all project documentation (e.g.: progress report etc.) shall be kept available for a period of two years from 31 December following the submission of the payment request of the MA to the EC including the final expenditure of the completed projects or otherwise required by the specific

legislation (e.g.: State Aid). The time period referred to shall be interrupted either in the case of legal proceedings or by a duly justified request of the EC;

- k) Coordinates the communication flow towards the MA/JS with regard to the timely submission of the progress reports and requests for reimbursement;
- l) Is responsible of the communication flow between the partnership and the Programme (mainly with the JS and the MA), it is in charge of spreading communication and information received by the Programme to its project partners, including the announcements to participate to seminars organized by the Programme;
- m) Ensures prompt solutions of management problems (e.g.: change of partners, requests for revision of activities etc.).

Project Partner responsibility

Each Project Partner carries out activities planned in the approved AF within the deadline agreed at Programme and partnership level. Each Project Partner shall assume the following main responsibilities:

In relation to what above, the Project Partner:

- a) Signs the Partnership Agreement;
- b) Respects and implements project arrangements to ensure a sound project implementation and ensures that its expenditure has been verified by the/a controller appointed by its country;
- c) Assumes responsibility towards the Lead Partner of repaying the received undue amount in case of irregularities in the declared expenditure;
- d) Ensures quality implementation of all the activities under its responsibility within the set timeline;
- e) Keeps regular contacts with the Lead Partner and communicates its eventual difficulties emerging during the project implementation;
- f) Provides the Lead Partner with the relevant information, data and material to be included in the progress reports;
- g) Provides the Lead Partner all financial data necessary for drafting the request for reimbursement to be sent to the JS;
- h) Ensures that all project documentation (e.g.: progress report etc.) shall be kept available for a period of two years from 31 December following the submission of the payment request of the MA to the European Commission including the final expenditure of the completed projects or otherwise required by the specific legislation (e.g.: State Aid). The time period referred to shall be interrupted either in the case of legal proceedings or by a duly justified request of the EC.

15 Exclusion criteria

Exclusion from participation

According to art 136 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046, potential beneficiaries might be excluded if any of the indicated conditions apply.

Exclusion from subsidy

According to art. 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046 applicants will not be granted financial assistance if, in the course of the grant award procedure, they:

- are in an exclusion situation established in accordance with Article 136;
- have misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information;
- were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

16 Ways of cooperation within a project proposal

The cooperation among Project Partners shall be compulsorily characterised by the following elements:

- Development of the operation;
- Implementation of the operation;
- Financing of operation.

The Project Partners can also cooperate in staffing the operation (optional).

Cooperation in the development of the operation

All partners shall contribute to the project idea generation and mirror their ideas and actions. They will also define how they intend to work together and the tasks distribution, having regard to their knowledge and experience. The development of activities should not consider the realization of "mirror" activities, i.e.: the same activities to be implemented by all partners, but a real distribution of tasks according to their skills and abilities, which shall be available for the benefit of the entire partnership. The Lead Partner plays a coordination role of the process.

Cooperation in the implementation of the operation

Under the overall coordination of the Lead Partner, the partnership starts the implementation of the approved operation. The implementation refers both to the realization of activities described in the approved application form and to the internal management activities. This means that activities must be carried out and coordinated on different sides of the MS. It is not enough that activities run in parallel: There must be clear content based links between what is happening on different sides of the border and regular contact between them. The Lead Partner is responsible for ensuring that activities are properly coordinated, that schedules are kept and that the right quality levels are achieved

Cooperation in the financing of the operation

The project is characterized by one budget which is the sum of each partner allocation. According to the lead partner principle characterizing the ETC projects, the financial responsibility of the project budget vis-à-vis the Programme lies within the lead partner, whereas a partnership agreement is signed between the lead and the project partners mirroring the subsidy contract duties and obligations. The partner budget mirrors the partners' responsibilities within the project.

Cooperation in the staffing of the operation

The project defines its internal organization attributing roles and the necessary staff to fulfil them. Duplication of functions are to be avoided: the project shall have only 1 joint project coordinator, 1 joint financial manager etc., who will keep regular contacts with the partners for the fulfilment of their tasks.

In order to be eligible, the proposal must select and describe in the appropriate section the first three compulsory cooperation dimensions.

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

Ways of cooperation and their actual shaping in the project proposal must also be mirrored in the Work Packages and qualitatively assessed.

17 Location of the operation and related activities

In accordance with the requirements for the geographical location of partners (art. 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013), the ADRION Programme supports activities that are implemented in the Programme area and for its benefit.

The same goes for the assimilated Italian partners, whose project management activities can, however, be implemented outside the geographical Programme area.

Location of operation

The *location of the operation* is the area where the operation is implemented/taking place: the wording 'location', 'located', 'implemented' and 'taking place' shall be used as synonyms.

Given that the location of the operation is influenced by the definition and scope of the operation, please consider what follows.

The location of an operation is relatively straightforward where the operation consists of investments in small infrastructures (pilot actions) that in the framework of ADRION are limited to equipment. For these, it is the location of the physical investment which is the determining factor.

For operations which consist of providing training, the location of the operation is the place where the training takes place irrespective of who the participants in the training are and whether they are working or residing in the category of region where the training takes place. In case the operation consists of granting a scholarship to students, the location of the operation is the place where the scholarship is provided to the students.

As a general rule, ERDF contribution must support actions implemented in the Union part of the Programme area.

In relation to the above and in accordance with art. 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the ADRION Programme accepts the implementation of activities by ERDF PPs outside the Union part of the Programme area but within the Programme area (i.e.: IPA Partner States) on condition they are reported in the AF as eligible costs activities or prior accepted by MA/JS on a case by case basis. Implemented activities must be for the benefit of the Programme area.

Costs of activities implemented by ERDF PPs outside the Union part of the Programme area but within the Programme area cannot exceed 20% of the ERDF support to the total project budget.

Example:

Eligible expenses related to the activities outside the EU Programme area:

YES: Expenses for the implementation of the activities realized by ERDF Partners in IPA area (e.g.: in case of a training implemented by an ERDF partner in an IPA country, costs correctly referable to this category could be: local experts, catering, venue);

NO: Travel and accommodation booked and bought in ERDF area - even if paid locally (for example: in case a hotel outside the EU part of the Programme area is booked within the Union part of the Programme area, the expenditure will be generated and thus incurred within the Union part of the Programme area even if the hotel bill is paid outside the Union part of the Programme area).

18 Project duration

In addition to the project duration set forth in the specific chapters describing the topics of the calls, approved projects will be offered the possibility to modify their starting date as initially reported in the application form before the signature of the subsidy contract.



The *preparatory phase* for the elaboration of the project proposal and the time needed for project administrative and financial closure shall be separately considered, i.e. added to the implementation period.

The preparatory phase can start as from 1st January 2014 and ends the day before the submission of the project proposal; it can be financially supported by the Programme only in case of project approval. Any preparation costs incurred by the partnership shall be indicated in the AF, under the specific budget line(s) concerned and included under the budget of the concerned partners.

The preparation costs shall have the form of a lump sum reimbursement: this means that in case of project approval, preparation costs shall be reimbursed with no need to present invoices or other administrative justification for the incurred costs.

Details on the preparation costs are provided in the paragraph 23.4.4.

The *implementation phase* starts with the date of signature of the subsidy contract or with an earlier date if the project so decides: in this latter case the partnership decides, at its own risk, to start the project implementation irrespective the decision for funding of the MC.

Operations shall not be selected where they have been physically completed or fully implemented before the application for funding is submitted to the MA, irrespective of whether all related payments have been made by the beneficiaries.

Planned activities shall be implemented within the indicated project start and end date.

The *project closure phase* refers to the finalization of all the legal and administrative obligations related to the granted activities and to incurred expenditure. It includes 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 can last not more than 3 months.

Details on how to structure the project activities are provided in paragraph 23.4 “*Project work packages*” and in the specific chapters on the third calls topics.

19 Funding method

ADRION contribution is limited to a co-financing rate up to 85% of eligible costs for all partners (i.e.: both benefitting from ERDF and IPA contribution).

The share of expenditure (at least 15%) not covered by ERDF or IPA funds shall be ensured by national co-financing source, i.e.: **Public funding**: public co-financing provided by central, regional or local public bodies, obtained either through specific-co-financing schemes established at Partner State 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

Each financing partner involved in a project proposal shall declare the nature of its co-financing while submitting the AF in the form of a declaration²³.

A general overview on the national co-financing systems of the ADRION Partner States is available on the Programme website.

20 Project budget

The system of financing is a budget-based grant (eligible costs). The grants are financed through reimbursement of eligible costs and will be calculated on the basis of a detailed estimated budget, clearly indicating the costs that are eligible for ERDF/IPA funding. Eligible partners shall ensure stable and sufficient sources of finance to ensure both project implementation and the continuity of the organisation activities throughout the lifespan of the project.

The EU grant may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the beneficiaries.

The budget of the project must be drafted following the real cost principle²⁴, fully accomplishing the principles of adequacy of costs and sound financial management. As provided under chapter 7 of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046, 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.

²³ In the Lead Applicant and Project Partners’ declaration public funding is disentangled in *Automatic public contribution* and *Other public contribution*.

²⁴ Except for preparation costs and when simplified cost options (flat rate) are used for calculating costs under staff and office and administration budget lines.

Use of Euro

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

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

Hierarchy of rules on eligibility of expenditure

Three levels of rules apply to the eligibility of expenditure in the framework of all Interreg Programmes, including ADRION. The following list expressly refers to the hierarchy of rules to be respected as far as the financial rules are concerned.

EU Regulations:

- Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046 (Financial regulation) on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union;
- Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 laying down common provisions;
- Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 on the European Regional Development Fund (its art 3 refers to the scope of support from the ERDF);
- Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal (reference to articles No 18, 19, 20, 27 and 28);
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 481/2014 of 4 March 2014 supplementing Regulation No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to specific rules on eligibility of expenditure for cooperation Programmes;
- Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 (Common implementing regulation) laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action as far as the application of public procurement is concerned.

Programme rules

- ADRION Cooperation Programme;
- The present Programme Manual and other Programme guidance documents to projects issued by the MA/JS.

Only in case there are no EU level and/or Programme level provisions or they do not offer detailed provisions, national, regional or local legislation and institutional rules apply.

National rules

- National legislation;
- Local and/or regional legislation;
- Institutional rules and regulations.

National rules cannot prejudice or restrict the rules established at a higher level (EU and Programme rules). Stricter Programme and national rules may apply only in areas that are not precisely regulated at the EU level or where EU Regulations provide the Partner States with a discretionary power to set such rules.

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



General eligibility requirements

In the following paragraphs a set of financial rules are presented: **they are applicable both to ERDF and IPA partners.**

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

- It has occurred in the eligible period defined by the Programme and within the eligible period related to the duration of the project (with the exception of preparation costs and project closure costs);
- It refers to costs occurred for the implementation of the project and in accordance with the proposal approved by the MC or its subsequent revisions approved by the Programme implementing bodies, if any;
- It is incurred within the ADRION Programme area (with the exceptions described in paragraph 17);
- It is essential for the implementation of the project and it would not be incurred if the project is not carried out;
- It relates to a product or service foreseen in the approved project proposal and that has been delivered and complies with publicity and information requirements;
- It is borne directly by the beneficiary and supported by accounting documents justifying incurred expenses/payments (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 referred to above (efficiency, effectiveness and economy);

- It complies, if required, to the public procurement rules applicable in that Partner State;
- It is registered in the beneficiary's accounts through a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code set in place specifically for the project;
- It is not in contradiction with specific Programme rules;
- It has been validated by an authorised national controller.

In accordance with the scope of support of the Regulation (EU) No 1301/2014 the following activities **shall not be supported**:

- a) The decommissioning or the construction of nuclear power stations;
- b) Investment to achieve the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from activities listed in Annex I to Directive 2003/87/EC;
- c) The manufacturing, processing and marketing of tobacco and tobacco products;
- d) Undertakings in difficulty, as defined under Union State aid rules²⁵;
- e) Investment in airport infrastructure unless related to environmental protection or accompanied by investment necessary to mitigate or reduce its negative environmental impact.

Without prejudice of the specific Programme rules defined in the specific paragraph, the following expenditure is considered **as not eligible** (reference to art. 69 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2014 and art. 2 of Delegated Regulation (EU) No 481/2014):

- 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;
- Recoverable value added tax (VAT), except where it is not recoverable under national VAT legislation;
- Fines, financial penalties and expenditure on legal disputes and litigation;
- Costs for gifts, except those not exceeding EUR 50 per gift where related to promotion, communication, publicity or information; ADRION has defined that the maximum eligible sum for gifts at project level shall not exceed EUR 500 at project budget level;
- Costs related to fluctuation of foreign exchange rate;
- Charges for national financial transactions.

The Programme also considers as not eligible the following expenditure:

- Under travel and accommodation budget line, the cost of taxi shall not be reimbursed, except when (i) it can be demonstrated that no public transport was available at the time and place needed, (ii) local transportation is covered with a daily allowance provided for by the internal rules of the concerned partner, or (iii) it is the most convenient transport mean.
- Costs for alcoholic beverages;
- Costs for the creation of a project web site, as ADRION will offer in its web site space for all funded projects in order to guarantee a coordinated visibility, unless duly justified;
- Heavy investments, infrastructures and works, as described by the Directive 2014/24/EU (annex II);

²⁵Guidelines on State aid for rescuing and restructuring non-financial undertakings in difficulty (OJ C 249, 31.07.2014).

- Basic courses (e.g. language, accounting, use of MS Office);
- Orchestras and shows unless clearly described in the AF and further approved.

Additionally, revenues, i.e.: cash in-flows *directly paid by users* for the goods and/or services provided by the project, such as charges borne directly by users for the use of infrastructure, sale or rent of land or buildings, or payments for services shall reduce the eligible expenditure and consequently the granted amount, with the exception of those operations whose total eligible budget do not exceed EUR 1.000.000.

Finally, the practice of shared costs shall not be allowed, i.e.: the costs incurred for activities carried out by one partner - or under its responsibility by a sub-contractor – and covered by more than one Project Partner (the practice of splitting cost items paid by one partner among Project Partners), even in cases where such activity is for the benefit of the whole project partnership. The budget allocated to a Project Partner shall fully reflect the activities actually implemented by that Partner.

Project Budget lines

Project budgets submitted to ADRION must be structured according to the following budget lines: (as provided for by the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 481/2014:

- a) Staff costs;
- b) Office and administrative expenditure;
- c) Travel and accommodation costs;
- d) External expertise and services costs;
- e) Equipment expenditure.

Please note that these budget lines do not apply to all work packages as described in paragraph 23.4.

In the case of small scale investments implemented in pilot activities, the related expenditure must be included in the budget line e) “equipment expenditure”.

Please note that each expenditure must be detailed indicating the number of unit and unit cost. Lack of this information shall impact the quality assessment of the project proposal.

The information provided herewith is intended to help applicants to properly allocate costs to each budget line during the application phase.

Staff costs

They refer to the gross employment costs of staff employed by the beneficiary institution (Lead Partner or Project Partner) for implementing the project. Staff can either be already employed by the beneficiary or contracted specifically for the project.

Staff costs shall be budgeted and reimbursed according to one of two options:

1. real costs;

2. flat rate of 20% of direct costs other than staff costs²⁶.

The choice is made at partner level and cannot be changed during the project implementation.

Staff costs reimbursed based on real costs

Eligible expenditure under this budget line is limited to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. **full time:** an employee dedicated 100% of his/her working time to the project. The full-time assignment to the project must be included in the employment/work contract or in a specific statement/order issued by the partner structure. No registration of the working time (e.g. time sheets) is required. In such cases the total of the gross employment cost is eligible.
2. **part-time with a fixed percentage of time worked per month:** an employee dedicated to the project by a fixed percentage of his/her working time. This percentage is set out in a document issued by the partner at the beginning of the project, and/or in the same employment/work contract. No registration of the working time (e.g. time sheets) is required. In such cases the **fixed percentage of the gross employment cost is eligible.**
3. **part-time with a flexible number of hours worked per month:** an employee dedicated to the project by a flexible percentage of his/her working time. In such case the hourly rate shall be calculated according to the following:

²⁶Direct costs other than staff costs are: travel and accommodation costs; external expertise and services costs; equipment expenditure.

hourly rate = latest documented annual gross employment cost/1720 (standard annual working time fixed by Regulation (EU) No 481/2014)

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

4. **contracted on an hourly basis:** an employee is contracted on an hourly basis and dedicates a certain number of hours to work on the project. The staff costs are calculated on the basis of the hourly rate fixed in the employment/work contract. Data from the working time registration system (e.g. time sheets) providing information on the number of hours spent per month on the project are required. Eligible staff cost shall result by multiplying the hourly rate by the number of hours actually worked on the project by each concerned individual.

Staff costs cannot exceed 50% of the project budget (eligibility criterion).

Staff costs reimbursed according to the flat rate option

Staff costs of any beneficiary choosing this option will be reimbursed for an amount equal to 20% of the sum of costs under all other budget lines, except “staff costs” and “office and administrative expenditure”, without the need of submitting any employment/work contract, any invoice or document having equivalent value nor any proof of payment.

The following table intends to support the choice between staff costs based on real costs and flat rate.

Staff costs reimbursed based on real costs	Staff costs reimbursed base on flat rate (20% of the direct costs other than staff costs)
Project elaboration	
Partnership can decide, in principle, the extent of involvement of their staff;	Ceiling for staff costs;
Project appraisal shall be aimed at verifying whether the staff costs are proportioned with the proposed activities and in accordance with average personnel costs expenditure within the Programme area;	Project appraisal shall be aimed at verifying whether the staff costs are in accordance with the proposed activities;
Project implementation	
Adequate audit trail of the necessary documentation shall be kept in accordance with the rules set above to get the reimbursement of staff costs;	No accountancy is foreseen (i.e.: no provision of supporting documentation shall be provided to first level controllers); When reporting staff costs, the distribution of costs between work packages shall reflect the distribution between work packages of the respective direct costs (e.g. costs for external experts and equipment amount to 40% of work package 1 and 60% of work package 2; thus 40% of staff costs shall be allocated to work package 1 and 60% to work package 2);
Staff costs expenditure shall be prior validated by the national controller to be reimbursed;	Staff costs shall not be subject to the validation of national controllers to get reimbursed;

Staff costs can be revised (increased or decreased) during the project implementation.	Flat rate option must be kept along the entire project implementation.
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Office and administrative expenditure

They cover operating and administrative expenses incurred by the beneficiary organisation that support delivery of project activities. Cost items comprised in the budget line are the following (exhaustive list):

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

Office and administrative expenditure shall be reimbursed by the Programme according to a flat rate of 10% of eligible staff costs. No detailed budget needs to be planned for this budget line since the expenditure shall be automatically calculated by the on line system for the applications submission (e-MS), both in the application phase and when submitting financial progress reports. This expenditure will be reimbursed without the need of submitting any invoice or document having equivalent value or any proof of payment.

Travel and accommodation costs

Expenditure under this budget line refers to the costs incurred by the beneficiary organisation for travels and accommodation of its own staff necessary for the delivery of the project.

The following items are eligible under this budget line:

- Travel costs (e.g. tickets, travel and car insurance, fuel, car mileage, toll, and parking fees);
- Meals costs;
- Accommodation costs;
- Visa costs;
- Daily allowances.

The following principles apply:

1. Travel and accommodation costs must clearly link to any project's activities and be essential for their effective delivery;

2. 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);
3. The principle of sound financial management should 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 Commission and applicable throughout the Programme area shall apply. They shall be considered as maximum ceilings²⁷. The amounts exceeding such values shall be in any case considered not eligible.
4. 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 (ref: art. 65.11 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013). 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 EU Programme area must be clearly indicated in the AF.

Travel and accommodation costs of:

- a) External experts and service providers including speakers, chairpersons, teachers, etc. shall be reimbursed under the external expertise and services budget line; the same applies to travel and accommodation costs;
- b) Associated partners can only be claimed under the external expertise and services budget line.

In case of approval of project proposals, costs for travel and accommodation for attending Programme or national authorities' meetings and events shall be considered as eligible: it is advisable that some additional budget is allocated to attend these events.

External expertise and services costs

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.

²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/perdiems-2017-03-17_en.pdf

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

When awarding external expertise and service contracts all Project Partners must ensure that EU and national rules on public procurement are respected, in accordance with the amount of the contract. All contracts must comply with the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment as defined in the EC Treaty and the Commission Interpretative Communication on the Community law applicable to contract awards below the EU thresholds²⁸.

In particular:

EU beneficiaries shall respect EU Directives and their respective national legislation on public procurement, depending on the amount concerned.

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

IPA beneficiaries shall follow the provisions of the Practical Guide on Contract Procedures for European Union External Actions (PRAG)²⁹ in line with the Financing Agreement concluded between the relevant Partner State, the European Commission and the Managing Authority (MA).

Expenditure of external expertise and service costs shall be limited to the following:

- a) Studies or surveys (e.g. evaluations, strategies, concept notes, design plans, handbooks);
- b) Training (e.g. venue and trainers);
- c) Translations;
- d) IT systems, modifications and updates (e.g. setting-up and/or update of a project IT system);
- e) Promotion, communication, publicity or information;
- f) Financial management;
- g) Services related to the organisation and implementation of events or meetings (including rent, catering or interpretation);
- h) Participation in events (e.g. registration fees);
- i) Legal consultancy and notarial services, technical and financial expertise, other consultancy and accountancy services;
- j) Intellectual property rights;
- k) Verification and validation of expenditure carried out by authorized national controllers;
- l) Travel and accommodation for external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers;
- m) Other specific expertise and services needed for the project.

²⁸(<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/>)

²⁹Information on the Procurement and Grants for European External Actions (PRAG) can be found in:
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/?header_description=DEVCO+Prag+to+financial+and+contractual+procedures+applicable+to+external+actions+financed+from+the+general+budget+of+the+EU+and+from+the+11th+EDF&header_keywords=ePrag%2C+europa

Eventual costs for promotional material (e.g.: leaflets, brochures, gadgets etc.) must be allocated under this budget line and will be considered as eligible only if it is demonstrated its efficacy in reaching one or more target groups. It is recommended that its expenditure will not be higher than 1% of the total eligible budget unless duly justified.

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

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

- Costs incurred by the in-house body are charged on a real costs basis without any profit margin;
- The sub-contracting to the in-house body of project related tasks complies with national and institutional public procurement provisions in force.

It is recommended that the budget line External expertise and services costs does not exceed 50% of the total project budget.

Equipment expenditure

This budget line covers costs related to equipment purchased, rented or leased by a beneficiary which is essential for the implementation of the project and for carrying out project activities.

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.

Eligible cost items under this budget line are:

- Office equipment;
- IT hardware and software;
- Furniture and fittings;
- Laboratory equipment;
- Machines and instruments,
- Tools or devices;
- Vehicles;
- Other specific equipment needed for the project.

Equipment necessary for the project implementation: i.e.: a tool or device used to carry out project activities and necessary for the delivery of the project outputs and, therefore, used for that scope can be classified within the following two categories:

- i **Equipment for general office use** as computers, office furniture, printers, cameras, etc. upon condition that it is for the exclusive use for the project and it can be demonstrated.

Costs of office equipment already in possession of the beneficiary organisation and used to carry out project activities are not eligible under this budget line, as such costs are already covered under the budget line office and administration.

Equipment for general office use shall be reimbursed by the Programme, based on the depreciation rates in compliance with the national rules and calculated only for the time period between the purchase of the equipment and the end of the project.

The full cost of equipment for general office use is only eligible when the following conditions are satisfied:

- Equipment item is exclusively used for the project implementation;
and
- The depreciation period is shorter than the time lap between the purchase of the equipment and the end of the project;
or
- Equipment item is not depreciable (e.g. low value asset) according to the national legislation of the concerned partner.

- ii **Equipment** considered as **thematic and functional** to the implementation of pilot actions. It can be a tool or a device that remains in use by the partnership after the completion of the project. Thematic and functional equipment are reimbursed in full.

Cost items accounted under the equipment budget line cannot be reimbursed under any other budget line.

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

The selection of the suppliers for the purchasing, rental and/or leasing of any equipment item shall comply with the relevant EU and national public procurement law in force, and in case of the IPA partners, with the PRAG rules.

Irrespective if under category (i) or (ii), the equipment cannot be sold (i.e.: change of owner) for at least 5 years after the project end date.

PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION AND SELECTION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

21 Publication

The announcements of the calls for proposals and the related application packages will be published on the web site of the ADRION Programmewww.adrioninterreg.eu.

Each application package contains:

- The present manual;
- The ADRION Cooperation Programme;
- The off-line Application Form;
- Electronic monitoring system (eMS) guidance;
- The compulsory templates to be filled in and attached to the AF:
 - Lead Applicant declaration;
 - Project Partners declarations;
 - Declaration of interest by each Associated Partners (if any).

Declarations must be:

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

Declarations must be scanned and uploaded together with the AF.

In case one of the four listed (letters a)-d)) elements is missing, the MA/JS reserves the right to ask for integrations.

The absence of more than one of the above listed elements – letters a)-d) - in the Lead Partner/Project Partner's declaration will cause the ineligibility of the Project Partner and of the project proposal in case of ineligibility of the Lead Applicant.

22 Submission of applications

Applications must be submitted through the online system (e-MS) accessible via ADRION web site <https://ems.regione.emilia-romagna.it/ems/app/main?execution=e1s1>

Lead applicants need to register on the e-MS system and provide a set of credentials (username and password) to create and submit their AF on behalf of the entire partnership.

Interested Lead Applicants are invited to access eMS for the purpose of creating credentials (ID and Password) as early as possible. **Credentials must refer to the legal representative/delegated/person: general email address (e.g: info@xxxxx. Xxx) should be avoided.**

Once inside eMS, the Lead Applicant must choose the call it wants to apply for (please refer to the instructions provided in the eMS guidance).

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

Applications must be submitted by the deadline (date and CEST time) reported in the announcements of the calls for proposals.

No other method of submission of an application will be accepted. Applications submitted in any other way will be automatically rejected. No exceptions will be made.

The Lead Applicant shall ensure to have officially submitted electronic AF and to have received an e-mail acknowledging the receipt of the submission. The Lead Applicant shall regularly inform the other project partners on the communications received through eMS.

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

Project acronym must be written in capital letters and numbers only.

The submission process is paperless.

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

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

The Lead Applicants are warmly recommended to fill in their project proposals and to submit it without waiting the last days to avoid the risk of possible system slowing down. Please note that complaints presented by Lead Applicants of project proposals submitted in the last 5 calendar days from the deadlines of the submission of the project proposals and related to the slowing down of the eMS system will not be accepted. Additionally, ADRION shall not accept any complaint from Lead Applicants which failed to meet the deadline.

23 Structure of the Application Form

The AF is structured according to the following:

1. *Project summary;*
2. *Project partners;*
3. *Project description;*
4. *Work plan, structured according to work packages;*
5. *Activities outside the Union part of the Programme area;*
6. *Partner budget;*
7. *Project budget overview;*
8. *Attachments.*

For most of the sections, a maximum number of characters is fixed by e-MS.

23.1 Project summary

The project summary provides an overview of the project. Projects are required to provide a clear description of the common challenge of the Programme area that the project intends to tackle; the overall objective, the targeted topic(s) of the call; the main outputs that will be produced, the expected change foreseen to be realized in respect to the current situation, the chosen approach and the transnational dimension.

23.2 Partnership

Partnership is the cornerstone in which lies the success of the project proposal. The quality of a project depends at a high extent from the composition of the project partnership.

Projects shall apply a result oriented approach even in the involvement of the right actors in the partnership, based on the project outputs and results the project intends to achieve. Please refer to the specific chapters devoted to the topics of the calls.

Only legal entities eligible for funding and listed in the AF as Project Partners may report their costs. In order to ensure a proper audit trail the MA needs to know which organisations receive Programme funding and whether they are eligible according to the Programme rules. Therefore, an **“umbrella” type of partnership structure, where one partner acts on behalf of, collects funding and represents other partners without naming them, is not possible.**

23.3 Project description

This part of the AF is divided in different sections: C.1 Project relevance, C.2 Project focus, C.3 Project context, C.4 Horizontal principles.

C.1 Project relevance

Projects are required to describe the territorial challenge addressed by the project and the relevance for the Programme area. Specific information on the challenges addressed in the area involved in the project should be provided. The current “state of art” and how the project will improve must be explained.

Projects are required also to describe the new solutions that will be developed during the project lifetime or the existing solutions that will be adopted during the project lifetime. Projects must highlight how the approach adopted goes beyond existing practices in the selected sector/Programme area/ participating countries.

Transnational cooperation is one of the main aspects on which the project should focus on. Projects must explain why transnational cooperation is essential to achieve the project objectives and results, as well as why project goals cannot be efficiently reached acting only on a national/regional/local/bilateral level. The benefit of the transnational territorial cooperation should be clearly demonstrated for the partners/target groups/Programme area.

The project must explain the way and the level of cooperation among partners in the framework of a project proposal according to the following compulsorily cooperation criteria: joint development, joint implementation, joint financing. The other cooperation criterion joint staffing is not obligatory.

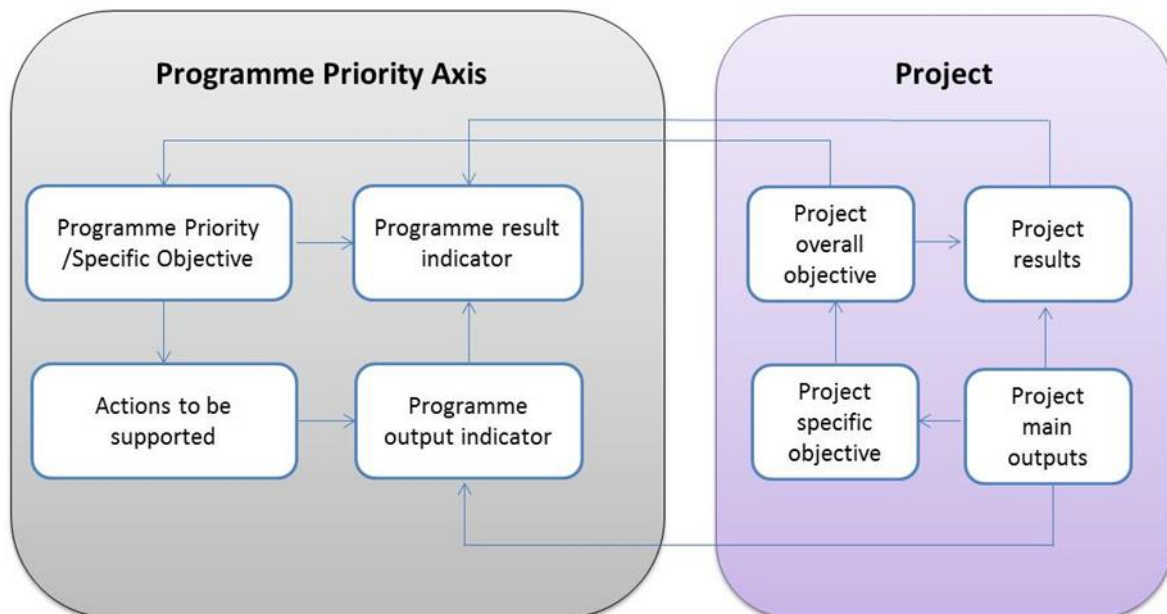
C.2 Project focus

Project proposals must clearly define their intervention logic from the beginning, setting their objectives and expected results and indicating clearly the change that they would like to bring in respect of the initial situation. The project intervention logic can be visualized as follows:



The project intervention logic must be coherent and show its contribution to the chosen Priority Axis intervention logic and its achievements:

- The **project overall objective** contributes to Programme priority specific objective; it 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** describes the **specific and immediate objectives** of the project that can be realistically **achieved within the project life-time**, through the deployment of the project outputs. The project proposal can include up to three project specific objectives);
- The **project result** describes the **change** compared to the initial situation. It contributes to Programme result, even if project results will not be directly aggregated on Programme level, as Programme result indicator measures the change in the whole Programme area;
- The **project outputs** contribute to the achievement of Programme outputs, ideally directly, so they can be aggregated on Programme level.



Projects not clearly addressing the identified topics will not be supported by the ADRION Programme.

Projects must show that they contribute to at least 2 Programme output indicators reported in the previous chapters 10.6, 11.5, 12.6 and 13.6.

The outputs being part of the project intervention logic are defined within the respective implementing work packages (please refer to chapters describing the topics of the calls).

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

C.3 Project context

The project proposal is required to describe how it intends to contribute to the wider existing strategies and policies (at EU/national/regional level) relevant for the thematic tackled. It must refer to EU policy framework Europe 2020, EU sectoral policies etc.

Furthermore, coordination or synergies with other national or European projects /initiatives (past, ongoing or planned) must be clearly described. The project proposal should highlight if and how they build on past efforts and results, as well as describe the relevant knowledge gained and how it will be used. Reference to existing studies, innovative technologies/practices or the experience of project partners in other similar initiatives must be described. Where it is the case, projects must explain also how the project avoids duplication/overlapping with similar initiatives.

C.4 Horizontal principles

The project proposal is required to indicate how it will contribute to the horizontal principles defined by the Programme. In the AF, a self-assessment of the respect of horizontal principles has to be performed. The project proposal is requested to indicate **only** those horizontal principles relevant for its intervention. Failing in indicating the relevant horizontal principles (e.g.: marking as positive the contribution to ALL principles without providing adequate justifications) will lead to the rejection of the project proposal. In case of a negative contribution to a horizontal principle, an adequate justification or adequate mitigation measures have to be provided, otherwise it will be considered as ineligible.

C.5 Project risks

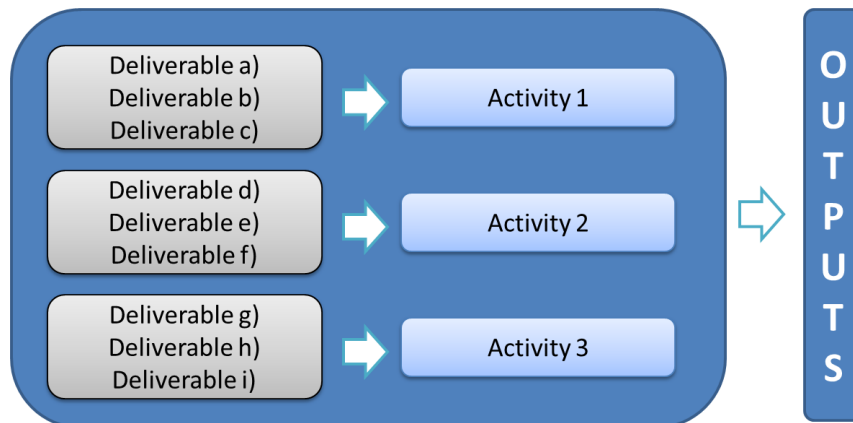
Up to three risks potentially jeopardizing the project must be listed, out of them 2 are compulsory) shall be included.

23.4 Project work packages

Project activities within the frame of the 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 Project Partners; additionally, it increases the capacities of the ADRION MA/JS to follow up the implementation of the expected activities and facilitates the procedures for reporting and accounting of expenditure.

Each work package (WP), structured in activities, shall provide information on the Project Partners involved, the description of the related deliverables and expected outputs, and the related budget.

The following figure illustrates the relationship between project activities, deliverables and outputs within a WP.



More specifically, each WP is composed of defined activities and related deliverables and expected outputs:

- An **activity** is a specific task performed for which resources are used; the proposed activities shall have a logical sequence and implemented for the direct benefit of the area /Project Partners involved in the project. For each activity it must be indicated the starting and ending date, as well as the related cost. The sum of the indicative budgets of single activities foreseen within the WP must be equal to the WP budget. **The activities of the Implementing WPs (please refer to the following paragraph) must lead to the deployment of one or more project outputs;**
- A **deliverable** is a tangible or intangible object produced as a side-product of the project that contributes to the achievement of a project output. Each activity can include one or more deliverables (e.g. feasibility study; swot analysis; sectoral analysis etc.). Project deliverables like minutes of the meetings with the stakeholders, working groups etc. cannot be listed as separate deliverables but must be aggregated into one deliverable (e.g. report on the involvement of the stakeholders). More than one deliverable can be necessary to produce one output and they must explicitly refer to the output to be produced in the work plan;
- An **output** is what has actually been produced as a result of the funding awarded to the project (i.e.: strategy/action plan, networks, tools and methodologies, pilot action and joint management systems and cooperation agreements). **It shall be captured by a Programme output indicator and contribute to the achievement of project result(s). Each implementing WP must foresee at least one project output. The outputs must be developed and implemented within the project lifetime.**

Detailed information on compulsory activities are reported in chapters 10-13.

The partnership can structure its project proposal according to a maximum number of WPs; some of them are, however, compulsory:

- a) Project management and coordination of activities;
- b) Communication;
- c) Project implementation – please refer to the compulsory WPs/activities for the selected topic.

23.4.1 Project management and coordination of activities

This WP includes the activities aim at ensuring a sound management and coordination of the project: both the overall project management and all aspects linked to the financial management must be described. It shall also provide proof on how the work between the partners involved by building a strong collaborative relationship is organized and distributed. The coordination and management activities shall result in the successful implementation of the project as well as in the production and submission of the administrative documents for accounting of expenditure and reporting on the activities implemented.

The partnership must set in place adequate project coordination structure(s) (e.g.: steering committee, steering group, coordination board etc.) ensuring that all Project Partners are equally represented, including the Associated Partners. The partnership may decide to involve in the coordination structure also representatives of institutions not directly involved in the project which can contribute to its implementation or spreading its outcomes.

Structure, responsibilities, and procedures for the day-to-day management and coordination (including whether it is foreseen the externalization of the management), internal communication, the reporting and evaluation procedures, if foreseen, risk and quality management.

The work package shall also include the activities related to the project closure that have to be finalized within 3 months after the official end date of the project: they include the submission of the required final administrative documents - the final progress report – the final payment claim and the eventual reconciliation with the initial granted amount.

Additionally, the Lead Applicant shall be requested to report to ADRION Monitoring Committee and EUSAIR Governing Board once a year on project outcomes.

23.4.2 Communication activities

The communication WP shall include the strategic planning of activities and clear indication of the target group(s) to address. Communication objectives must be specific and measurable (i.e.: proposing of “raising awareness” or to “spread results” without providing to whom and how is not enough).

The following elements shall be considered:

- Identification and definition of the communication objective (up to two per specific project objective are allowed to be included in eMS), message, approach/tactics chosen and target groups the project intends to achieve;
- Integration with the overall project strategy and project specific objectives;
- Quantification of the communication products (target values), detailed planning of their realization and estimated budget;
- Measurement of the efficiency of the planned communication activities;
- Provisions for feedback mechanisms and evaluation measures for the communication activities;
- Insurance of adequate capitalization of the project achievements (capturing knowledge produced by the project and drawing lessons on an ongoing basis).

The project proposal shall include activities to capitalize on the achieved results and outputs in order to mainstream them - beyond project geographical context and timeframe - into wider policies and strategies, action plans, thus guaranteeing a further development of what achieved within the project also in terms of eventual future larger investment or leverage of funds.

Capitalization activities should take into account the spreading of the achieved results to wider target groups /audience beyond the partnership and the target groups already achieved during project implementation and /or the increase of awareness of relevant for the chosen topic stakeholders.

The proposed capitalization shall be in line and concretely implemented with what proposed in the Durability and Transferability of Main Outputs sections of the submitted AF.

Beyond project-based capitalization activities, each project shall provide participation to Capitalization events organized at Programme level.

In order to ensure a shared and consistent brand identity of the ADRION Programme, a common brand identity has been developed. Each approved operation shall be required to use an integrated project logo (template provided by ADRION Programme).

Additionally, in order to ensure accessibility, durability and consistency of the information, each ADRION project will have its own dedicated page on the Programme website, showcasing the project to a wide audience. The project page(s) will include a pre-filled information field completed by the Programme, and dynamic information to be filled-in by projects.

23.4.3 Project implementation

The project implementation is the heart of the project and describes what the partnership intends to implement to reach the foreseen goals.

One up to three implementing WPs can be devoted to describe the project implementation; the WP refers to a group of related project activities necessary for the realization of the described project outputs and goals.

The realization of pilot actions (demonstration activities or small scale investments), if any, shall be included in one of these work packages.

23.4.4 Non-compulsory work packages

Preparation costs

The approved projects which have signed the Subsidy Contract and the Partnership Agreement with the MA are entitled to receive reimbursement of their preparation costs in the form of a lump-sum of max EUR 11.800 of total eligible expenditure. That means that they will be reimbursed with no need to present invoices or other supporting documents for the incurred costs.

The reimbursement of preparation costs will follow the principles specified hereunder:

- Any preparatory costs incurred by the partnership must be indicated in the AF, under the specific budget line(s) concerned and included under the budget of the concerned Project Partners;
- The formal request for reimbursement of the preparatory costs can be submitted by the Lead Partner only after the signature of the Subsidy Contract and Partnership Agreement;
- The amount of actual reimbursement will result from applying the co-financing rate applicable (up to 85%) to the respective preparatory cost budget of the concerned partners (e.g. to which the lump sum is allocated), as indicated in the AF;
- The lump sum will be reimbursed to the Lead Partner; it will be its duty to transfer to its partners their respective shares, according to the approved preparatory costs;

- Any costs incurred by the projects between the date of submission of the AF and the date of signature of the subsidy contract (between the end of the preparation period and the start of the implementation period) for negotiating/satisfying specific conditions for approval cannot be claimed;
- In case a project is not implemented or even started, the MA will recover the amounts of EU funds already reimbursed based on this lump-sum.

Under the Work Package Preparation costs all budget lines but equipment can be budgeted.

23.4.5 Activities implemented by ERDF Project Partners outside the Union part of the Programme area (IPA ADRION area)

Please refer to paragraph 17 of the present Programme Manual.

23.4.6 Project Partner budget

Project financial table is partly pre-filled by the system with data on Project Partners.

The starting point for drafting the project budget is section “Partner budget”. The budget of each Project Partner is broken down per budget line, work package and reporting period.

Please note that modifications of project start and end dates and periods after the insertion of budget data might have an impact on “Partner budget”. Financial data are inserted per period and are lost when deleting a period.

When entering data please remember to regularly save them.

Steps to be undertaken when defining the budget are the following:

- a. Enter the budget of the selected Project Partner;
- b. Select whether the concerned Project Partner organisation will charge staff costs to the project according to real costs or a flat rate option. Please note that, after the submission of the AF, the partner will not have the possibility to change this choice anymore;
- c. Three tables will be displayed on the screen: the first table displaying budget lines and work packages; the second table displaying budget lines and reporting periods; the third table displaying reporting periods and work packages.

Applicant enters the partner budget in the first table “Budget lines and work packages”. The other two tables will be automatically updated once budget data are entered.

For budget line 1 “*Staff costs*”: unitary costs and number of units must be included for work package and reporting period. The applicant has to specify the type of staff (e.g.: “Part time with a flexible number of hours”). In the column Comments a short description must be added (e.g.: “Finance officer, Senior staff, in charge for finance report, and the related amount).

Institutions choosing the flat rate option for the reimbursement of staff costs cannot enter any information, since the budget is automatically calculated.

For budget line 2 “*Office and administrative expenditure*”: data cannot be entered since the budget is automatically calculated.

For budget line 3 *“Travel and accommodation costs”*: unitary costs and number of units must be included for the entire work package and reporting period, including a short description explaining the purpose of the travel and, where possible, the destination.

For budget line 4 *“External expertise and services costs”* and budget line 5 *“Equipment expenditure”*: a breakdown of the budget line at the level of each item included under this budget line is to be created. Applicants have to specify each concerned item to be purchased (please ensure consistency with the same data reported in other sections of the AF): costs, nature and quantity. In the case of equipment items, information is to be included also on the equipment type (i.e. *“equipment for general office use”* or *“thematic equipment”*). In case of depreciation, information must be added on the rate and calculation of the depreciation period. The budget allocated to the single cost item has then to be entered at the corresponding work package and reporting period.

In case the project proposal is expected to generate revenues, they must be included in the relevant category available in the budget table. One aggregated amount is to be included for the entire work package and reporting period.

Once the partner budget is inserted, information on national co-financing type and source is to be included under *“Partner budget”*. Two tables are available: the former presents the overall Programme co-financing and the partner contribution according to the applicable co-financing rate (automatically filled-in by the system), the latter refers to the partner co-financing sources and is to be filled in by the applicant. In the table on partner co-financing sources, the system by default includes the partner’s own resources as first co-financing source, in line with information on legal status. To add other co-financing sources the applicant has to provide information on the source of co-financing (i.e., public, automatic public), and the amount. Please check carefully the consistency of the total amount of co-financing manually entered in the second table with the amount automatically calculated in the first table.

Automatic public co-financing refers to specific co-financing schemes set up by some Partner States.

23.4.7 Project budget overview

The overall project budget coming from data entered at Project Partner level can be seen in sections Project breakdown budget and in *“Project budget”* of the AF. Each budget table can also be exported as an Excel file.

23.4.8 Attachments

In this section it is possible to upload all the necessary files requested (e.g.: Lead Partner, Project Partner and associated partners declarations.).

Please remember to properly name each uploaded file to easily identify them.

24 Assessment of applications

The assessment of the application is coordinated by the MA and performed by the JS, with the support of the NCPs and eventually of external experts selected through dedicated Call for Experts.

In order to ensure equal, fair and transparent approach, the project proposals are assessed according to a set of criteria and sub-criteria previously elaborated by the Programme, approved by the MC and specified in Annexes 2, 3 and 4. The results of the assessment will be reported in a project assessment grid to be prepared to support the MC decision.

The MC is in charge of the final decision on the selection of the operations for funding.

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

Admissibility and eligibility check

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

Only those applications which successfully pass these checks will progress in the evaluation process. The list of admissibility and eligibility checks to be fulfilled is provided in Annexes 2 and 3.

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

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

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

Quality assessment

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

The goal of the quality assessment is to provide the MC an overall picture containing the relevant information in order to allow project approval or rejection.

The quality assessment shall be performed by the JS in cooperation with the eventual support of a team of experts.

As mentioned above, the assessment is performed according to a list of criteria and sub-criteria and their fulfilment by the project proposal.

The quality assessment criteria are divided into two Groups:

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

Strategic assessment	<i>Criteria</i>
Group 1	
	<i>Project context (relevance and strategy)</i>

	<i>Cooperation character</i>
	<i>Project's contribution to Programme's objectives, expected results and outputs</i>
	<i>Partnership relevance</i>
Operational assessment Group 2	<i>Criteria</i>
	<i>Management</i>
	<i>Communication</i>
	<i>Work plan</i>
	<i>Budget</i>

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

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

The total score of each criterion is the sum of the scores attributed to each sub-criterion.

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

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

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

Strategic assessment

Only those project proposals having reached an overall score of at least 48/80 (60% of the overall score related to strategic elements) and of at least 12/20 for each criterion (60% of the score at criterion level) of the Strategic Assessment will progress to the Operational assessment and be appraised according to the criteria of Group 2.

Operational assessment

As far as the Operational Assessment is concerned, the proposal must reach at least 48/80 (60% of the overall score related to operational elements) and at least 12/20 for each criterion (60% of the score at criterion level).

Only those proposals having passed the quality assessment (Strategic and Operational) with an overall score of at least 96/160 (i.e.: 60% of the overall maximum score) and of at least 12/20 (60% of the score at criterion level) for each criterion shall be appraised according to the further following steps described below.

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

State Aid compliance check

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

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

The analysis shall bring to one of the following outcomes:

- a) The project activities are not State Aid relevant;
- 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);
- 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 case letter b), or c) or both apply, references shall be included in the conditions for improvement and then in the Subsidy Contract in order to ensure their respect; additionally, they will be regularly checked by the MA/JS during the project implementation.

Anti-fraud check

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

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

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

In case the fraudulent behaviour/practice affects:

- a) the Lead Applicant: the AF shall be rejected;
- b) a Project Partner, it will be excluded from the project proposal; in case the exclusion of such partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements this will cause the rejection of the project proposal.

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

Absence of double funding

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

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

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

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.

Finalization of the project assessment grid

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

25 Decision making and communication to the Lead Applicants

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

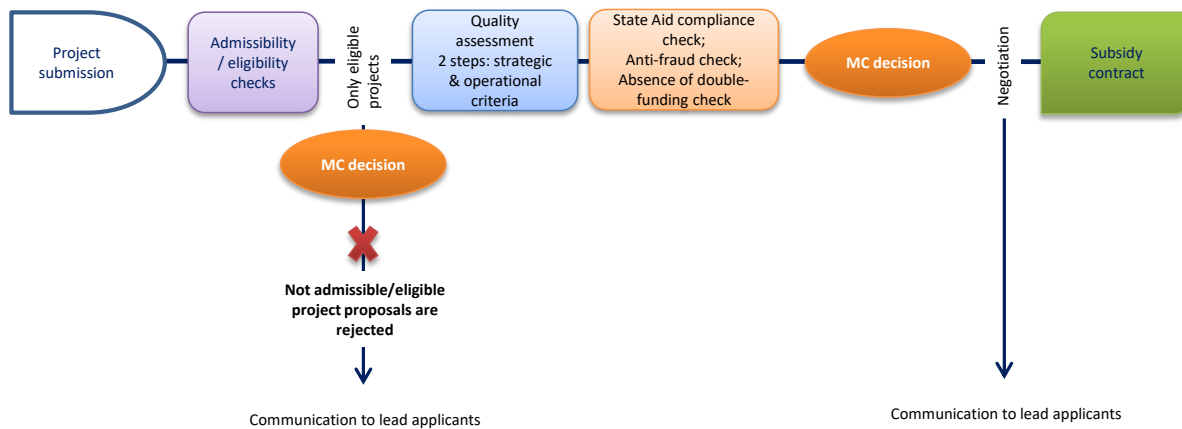
A project proposal can be:

- 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 Lead Partner and/or the Project Partners 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 funded under conditions, the latter are approved by the MC too; conditions may also foresee a lower budget than the amount requested by the partnership.

All Lead Applicants of the assessed projects shall be notified by MA/JS in written form about the MC decision. The Lead Applicant shall immediately inform all the Project Partners accordingly.

The picture below summarizes the assessment process:



Additionally:

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

26 Contractual provisions

De minimis declaration

As reported in paragraph 7, the *de minimis* ceiling applies both to IPA and ERDF project partners: in case the activities proposed in the approved projects by one or more ERDF or IPA project partners are State Aid relevant, and the *de minimis* regime has to be applied, the concerned Project Partners shall provide, before the signature of the Subsidy Contract takes place, a declaration including the total amount of *de minimis* aid granted by Italy, where the MA is located, if any, other than the grant to be received by the ADRION Programme.

Principle of non-cumulative award (double funding)

Applicants must declare to inform the MA/JS on any EU or other public funding source - be international, national, regional or local - received after the signature of the declarations at the time of submission of the project proposal have changed and affecting it.

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

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

Project legal framework

In the event a subsidy is awarded, MA/JS shall proceed with the verification of the existence of the signatory person and its power of signature.

A Subsidy Contract, drawn up in Euro and detailing the conditions and percentage of funding, will be sent to the Lead Partner on behalf of the entire partnership.

The Subsidy Contract will be signed by the MA and by the Lead Partner.

Two copies of the original Subsidy Contract shall be signed by the Lead Partner on behalf of all project partners and must be returned to the MA immediately. The MA will sign them last.

As far as the Partnership Agreement is concerned, the Lead Partner shall inform the MA about its signature by all Project Partners.

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

Payment procedure

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

27 Advance payment

The signature of the Partnership Agreement is a condition for the disbursement of a pre-financing addressed only to the IPA Project Partners up to 10% of IPA contribution; pre-financing will be allocated according to the availability of funds by the Programme.

The advance payment shall be compensated - in equal shares - with the first two payments due to the concerned Project Partners, according to actually incurred and validated expenditure included in the related project progress reports.

In case the concerned Project Partner(s) does not manage to submit enough validated expenditure for compensating the advance payment received, the MA/JS will further enquire in order to adopt the necessary steps.

28 Publicity by the Programme

The MA, the National Authorities and/or the European Commission may publish the list of projects, including:

- beneficiary name (only of legal entities; no natural persons shall be named);
- project name;
- project summary;
- project start date;
- project end date (expected date for physical completion or full implementation of the project);
- total eligible expenditure allocated to the project;
- Union co-financing rate, as per priority axis;
- project postcode; or other appropriate location indicator;
- country;
- name of category of intervention for the project.

29 Complaints procedure

Any complaint related to the assessment and selection of the project proposals shall be addressed by the Lead Applicant, 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 Project Partners individually shall not be taken into consideration.

Receivable complaints must be clearly identifiable by the wording “formal complaint” and project number and acronym in the subject of the request and submitted according to the rules and deadline defined in the communication sent by MA. The Lead applicant shall be in charge of specifying what failures or mistakes have been assumed to happen and shall include clear reference to programme documents. Requests for information or clarifications shall not be considered as complaints.

Please note that complaints presented by Lead Applicants of project proposals submitted in the last 5 calendar days from the deadlines of the submission of the project proposals and related to the slowing down of eMS system will not be accepted. Additionally, ADRION shall not accept any complaint from Lead Applicants 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 as admissible, it will be submitted to the Complaint Committee.

The Complaint Committee is composed of two Monitoring Committee Partner State representatives - current and future Monitoring Committee Chair - and the MA. The JS is involved with an advisory function.

The complaint can only make reference to:

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

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

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

30 Data Protection

The processing of personal data by the ADRION Programme is governed by Regulation (EU) No 2016/679 of the European Parliament and the Council 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.

The data provided by the applicants in the Application Form are processed for assessing project application forms, awarding funds to selected proposals, as well as managing, monitoring and evaluating the funded projects, performing analyses, surveys and studies, protecting the financial interests of the EU (notably for verifications and audits), and for communicating on the ADRION Programme and its actions (projects and capitalisation platforms). For further details please refer to [eMS Terms of Use](#).

31 Contacts

For any further information please contact:

- the NCP of your Partner State: coordinates are reported on the ADRION web site;
- The ADRION Programme: info@interregadrion.eu

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

Annex 1 – Bibliography

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- European Commission - COM (2011) 682 final: Social Business Initiative Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation;
- European Commission - COM (2013) 83 final: Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020;
- Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 1 December 2013 on a European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI");
- European Commission (2017) - Vision and trends of social innovation for Europe;
- European Commission (2014) - Social economy and social entrepreneurship – Social Europe Guide volume 4.

Priority Axis 3 – Topic Maritime transport

- SWD (2014) 190 final of 17 June 2014: Action Plan – Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region;
- EUNETMAR Analysis to support the elaboration of the Adriatic and Ionian maritime Action Plan (March 2014): thematic report 2 Connecting the region (2nd pillar);
- 2013 TEN-T Guidelines: Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 and the 2011 Transport White Paper «Roadmap for a single European transport»;
- Directive 2002/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on reporting formalities from ships arriving in and /or departing from ports of the Member States and repealing Directive 2002/6/EC of 20 October 2010;

- Directive 2010/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Community vessel traffic monitoring and information system and repealing Council Directive 93/75/EEC of 27 June 2002;
- IMO – International Maritime Organization - Resolution MSC 139 (76) of 2002 – Mandatory Ship reporting system;
- Resolution MSC 433 (98) of 2017 – Guidelines and criteria for ship reporting systems;
- ESI 2014-2020 objectives – digital agenda;
- Reg. (EU) 1315/2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the Trans-European transport network and repealing Decision N. 661/2010/EU;
- International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and related regulations.

Priority Axis 3 – Topic City transport

- SWD (2014) 190 final of 17 June 2014: Action Plan – Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions concerning the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region;
- Europe on the Move – an agenda for a socially fair transition towards clean, competitive, and connected mobility for all - COM (2017) 283 final;
- 2017/2545(RSP) 2017/2545(RSP) - Resolution on road transport in the European Union;
- EU Reference Scenario 2016: Energy, Transport and GHG Emissions – Trends to 2050;
- Urban Agenda for the EU;
- 2020 CIVITAS - <https://civitas.eu>.

Annex 2– Admissibility and Eligibility Criteria to be applied to: Priority Axis 1 - TOPIC 1 and 2; Priority Axis 3 – TOPIC 1

Admissibility criteria

1	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Admissibility criteria	Admissibility questions	Consequence on failure
1.1	Application Form	Use of on-line system	Has the Application Form been submitted via the e-MS?	Rejection of the project proposal.
1.2	Application Form	Completeness of the submitted Application Form	Have all sections of the Application Form been filled in? Does the project proposal address to one topic within the selected Priority Axis/Call for proposals? Has the Application Form been filled in English?	Rejection of the project proposal.
1.3	Lead Applicant, Project Partners, Associated Partners declarations;	Completeness and correctness of the Project Partners' declarations	Has the Lead Applicant declaration been submitted respecting all the following compulsory requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has the declaration been submitted using e-MS? - Has the declaration been submitted using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)? - Has the declaration been completely filled-in and in English? Have all the Project Partners' declarations been submitted respecting all the following compulsory requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the declarations been submitted using e-MS? 	Rejection of the project proposal if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Lead Applicant declaration is missing or not provided via e-MS; - The Lead Applicant declaration has not been provided using the correct Programme template or the template content has been altered; - The Lead Applicant declaration has not been completely filled in. Partner exclusion, if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Project Partner declaration is missing or not provided via e-MS;

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the declarations been submitted using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)? - Have the declarations been completely filled-in and in English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declaration has not been provided using the correct Programme template or the template content has been altered; - Declaration has not been completely filled in. <p>Rejection of the project proposal in case the exclusion of such Project Partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.</p>
			<p>In case of involvement of Associated Partner(s), has (have) the declaration(s) of interest been submitted?</p>	<p>Exclusion of the Associated partner(s).</p>
			<p>Are per each annex (Lead Applicant, Project and Associated Partners declarations) the 4 following requirements present?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It has been printed on headed paper; 2. It has been stamped; 3. It has been signed by the legal representative or his/her authorised delegated person; 4. It has been dated. 	<p>Rejection of the project proposal if the Lead Applicant declaration does not comply with at least 3 out of 4 requirements (headed paper, stamped, signed, dated). Integration of the missing requirement is allowed in case 1 requirement has not been fulfilled.</p> <p>Exclusion of the Project Partner/ Associated Partner if the declaration does not comply with at least 3 out of 4 requirements (headed paper, stamped, signed, dated). Integration of the missing requirement is allowed in case 1 requirement has not been fulfilled.</p> <p>Rejection of the project proposal in case the exclusion of such Project Partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.</p>

Eligibility criteria

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Consequence on failure
2.1	Application Form	The project proposal fulfils the minimum requirements for transnational partnership	Does the project proposal have a minimum of 6 financing Project Partners (ERDF/IPA) located within the ADRION eligible area from at least 6 different Partner States?	Rejection of the project proposal.
			Are there at least 4 financing Project Partners from 4 different ERDF Partner States and at least 2 financing partners from 2 different IPA Partner States? Is the partnership constituted by maximum 16 Project Partners?	Rejection of the project proposal.
		The project proposal respects the limits applied to transnational partnership and call	Is each Partner State represented by a maximum of 2 financing Project Partners?	Rejection of the project proposal.
			Is the Lead Applicant institution involved in maximum 1 project proposal per Priority Axis/Call for proposals?	Rejection of the additional received project proposal(s) according to their time of arrival.
			Is each Project Partner involved in maximum 1 project proposal per Priority Axis/ Call for proposals?	Exclusion of the Project Partner(s) determined by the time of arrival of the project proposal. Rejection of the project proposal if the minimum requirements for transnational partnerships are not fulfilled.
Are 2 or more financing Project Partners cumulatively excluded also due to other admissibility/eligibility criteria?	Rejection of the project proposal.			
2.2	Application Form, section B.1 (the check	The Lead Applicant is eligible	Is the Lead Applicant located (legal seat and seat of operations) in one of the NUTS 1 or NUTS 2 region of an ERDF Partner State of the Programme (exception: Italian Assimilated Partners)?	Rejection of the project proposal.

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Consequence on failure
	on the legal status is performed by the National Contact Points)		<p>Does the Lead Applicant belong to one of the following categories as reported in the Programme Manual?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public authority /public body (national and regional), including those which are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but are located outside of it (Assimilated Partner – only for Italian partners); 2. Body governed by public law; <p>In case of involvement of public body (other than public authority) or body governed by public law: is the relevant competent public authority (at national or regional level) involved as Associated Partner within the same project proposal?</p>	<p>Rejection of the project proposal, if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It reveals being a private body; - If the requested competent public authority is not involved in the same project proposal as Associated Partner.
2.3	Application Form, section B.2 (the check on the legal status is performed by the National Contact Points)	Financing Project Partners are eligible	<p>Is the financing Project Partner located (legal seat and seat of operation) in one of the NUTS 1 or NUTS 2 region of an ERDF /IPA Partner State of the Programme (exception: Assimilated Partner(s) – only for Italian partners)?</p>	<p>Exclusion of the Project Partner if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is not located in one NUTS 1 or NUTS 2 region of the ERDF/IPA Partner State of the Programme; - it reveals being a private body; - In case of public body/body governed by public law: if the requested competent public authority is not involved within

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Consequence on failure
			<p>Does the Project Partner belong to one of the following categories as reported in the Programme Manual?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public authority /public body (national, regional), including those which are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but are located outside of it (Assimilated Partner – only for Italian partners); 2. Body governed by public law; <p>In case of involvement of public body (other than public authority) or body governed by public law: is the relevant competent public authority (at national or regional level) involved as Associated Partner within the same project proposal?</p>	<p>the same project proposal as Associated Partner.</p> <p>Rejection of the project proposal in case the exclusion of such partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.</p>
2.4	Application form, section A1 first table; Lead Applicant and Project Partner declarations	Secured national co-financing	<p>Is the amount of the national co-financing indicated in the Lead Applicant declaration equal or higher the amount of the national contribution indicated in the Application Form?</p>	Rejection of the project proposal.
			<p>Is the amount of the national co-financing indicated in the Project Partners' declaration equal or higher the amount of the national contribution indicated in the Application Form?</p>	<p>Exclusion of Project Partner(s).</p> <p>Rejection of the project proposal in case the exclusion of such Project Partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.</p>
2.5	Application form, section A1, table <i>Project budget - overview ERDF and IPA co-</i>	Requested EU co-financing within the fixed threshold	Is budget line staff cost not higher than 50% of the total project budget?	Rejection of the project proposal.

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Consequence on failure
	<i>financing per budget line</i>			
2.6	Application form, section C.1.4	Project Partners jointly cooperate	Do Project Partners cooperate in all the following compulsory ways: joint development, joint implementation and joint financing?	Rejection of the project proposal.

Annex 3– Admissibility and Eligibility Criteria to be applied to: Priority Axis 3 – TOPIC 2

Admissibility criteria

1	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Admissibility criteria	Admissibility questions	Consequence on failure
1.1	Application Form	Use of on-line system	Has the Application Form been submitted via the e-MS?	Rejection of the project proposal.
1.2	Application Form	Completeness of the submitted Application Form	Have all sections of the Application Form been filled in? Does the project proposal address to one topic within the selected Priority Axis/Call for proposals? Has the Application Form been filled in English?	Rejection of the project proposal.
1.3	Lead Applicant, Project Partners, Associated Partners declarations;	Completeness and correctness of Project Partners' declarations	Has the Lead Applicant declaration been submitted respecting all the following compulsory requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has the declaration been submitted using e-MS? - Has the declaration been submitted using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)? - Has the declaration been completely filled-in and in English? Have all the Project Partners' declarations been submitted respecting all the following compulsory requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the declarations been submitted using e-MS? - Have the declarations been submitted using the original Programme template (i.e.: not altered)? 	Rejection of the project proposal if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Lead Applicant declaration is missing or not provided via e-MS; - The Lead Applicant declaration has not been provided using the correct Programme template or the template content has been altered; - The Lead Applicant declaration has not been completely filled in. Partner exclusion, if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Project Partner declaration is missing or not provided via e-MS; - Declaration has not been provided using the correct Programme template or the

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the declarations been completely filled-in and in English? 	<p>template content has been altered;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declaration has not been completely filled in. <p>Rejection of the project proposal in case the exclusion of such Project Partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.</p>
			<p>In case of involvement of Associated Partner(s), has (have) the Declaration(s) of interest been submitted?</p>	<p>Exclusion of the Associated partner(s).</p>
			<p>Are per each annex (Lead Applicant, Project and Associated Partners declarations) above the 4 following requirements present?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It has been printed on headed paper; 2. It has been stamped; 3. It has been signed by the legal representative or his/her authorised delegated person; 4. It has been dated. 	<p>Rejection of the project proposal if the Lead Applicant declaration does not comply with at least 3 out of 4 requirements (headed paper, stamped, signed, dated). Integration of the missing requirement is allowed in case 1 requirement has not been fulfilled.</p> <p>Exclusion of the Project Partner/ Associated Partner if the declaration does not comply with at least 3 out of 4 requirements (headed paper, stamped, signed, dated). Integration of the missing requirement is allowed in case 1 requirement has not been fulfilled.</p> <p>Rejection of the project proposal in case the exclusion of such Project Partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.</p>

Eligibility criteria

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Consequence on failure
2.1	Application Form	The project proposal fulfils the minimum requirements for transnational partnership	Does the project proposal have a minimum of 6 financing Project Partners (ERDF/IPA) located within the ADRION eligible area from at least 6 different Partner States?	Rejection of the project proposal.
			Are there at least 4 financing Project Partners from 4 different ERDF Partner States and at least 2 financing partners from 2 different IPA Partner States? Is the partnership constituted by maximum 16 Project Partners?	Rejection of the project proposal.
			Is at least 1 public authority, identified at national, regional or local level, competent in the matter of urban transport involved for each eligible metropolitan area included in the project proposal?	Exclusion of the metropolitan area for which the requested public authority is missing; Rejection of the project proposal if the minimum requirements for transnational partnerships are not fulfilled.
		The project proposal respects the limits applied to transnational partnership and call	Is each Partner State represented by a maximum of 2 financing Project Partners?	Rejection of the project proposal
			Is the Lead Applicant institution involved in maximum 1 project proposal per Priority Axis/Call for proposals?	Rejection of the additional received project proposal(s) according to their time of arrival.
			Is each Project Partner involved in maximum 1 project proposal per Priority Axis/ Call for proposals?	Exclusion of the Project Partner(s) determined by the time of arrival of the project proposal. Rejection of the project proposal if the minimum requirements for

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Consequence on failure
				transnational partnerships are not fulfilled.
			Are 2 or more financing Project Partners cumulatively excluded also due to other admissibility/eligibility criteria?	Rejection of the project proposal.
2.2	Application Form, section B.1 (the check on the legal status is performed by the National Contact Points)	The Lead Applicant is eligible	<p>In case of national and regional public authority/public body/body governed by public law/related associations: is the Lead Applicant located (legal seat and seat of operations) in one of the NUTS 1 or NUTS 2 region of an ERDF Partner State of the Programme (exception: Assimilated Partner(s)- only for Italian partners)?</p> <p>In case of local public authority/public body/body governed by public law/related associations: is the Lead Applicant located (legal seat and seat of operations) in one of the eligible metropolitan areas (ref. to list of eligible metropolitan areas as included in the Programme Manual)?</p> <p>Does the Lead Applicant belong to one of the following categories as reported in the Programme Manual?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public authority /public body (national, regional, local) and related associations, including those which are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but are located outside of it (exception: Assimilated Partner(s)- only for Italian partners); 2. Body governed by public law and associations constituted by several bodies governed by public law <p>In case of involvement of public body (other than public authority) or body governed by public law/ related associations): is the relevant competent public authority identified at national, regional, local level, and their associations, representative of the eligible metropolitan areas involved as financing Project Partner within the same project proposal?</p>	<p>Rejection of the project proposal</p> <p>Rejection of the project proposal, if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It reveals being a private body; - If the relevant competent public authority is not involved in the same project proposal as Lead Applicant/Project Partner.

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Consequence on failure
2.3	Application Form, section B.2 (the check on the legal status is performed by the National Contact Points)	Financing Project Partners are eligible	<p>In case of national and regional public authority/public body/body governed by public law/related associations: is the financing Project Partner located (legal seat and seat of operations) in one of the NUTS 1 or NUTS 2 region of an ERDF/IPA Partner State of the Programme (exception: Assimilated Partner(s) only for Italian partners)?</p> <p>In case of local public authority /public body/ body governed by public law/related associations: is the financing Project Partner located (legal seat and seat of operations) in one of the eligible metropolitan areas (ref. to list of eligible metropolitan areas as included in the Programme Manual)?</p> <hr/> <p>Does the financing Project Partner belong to one of the following categories as reported in the Programme Manual?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public authority /public body (national, regional, local) / related associations, including those which are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but are located outside of it (exception: Assimilated Partner(s)-only for Italian partners); 2. Body governed by public law and associations constituted by several bodies governed by public law. <p>In case of involvement of public body (other than public authority) / body governed by public law/ related associations: is the relevant competent public authority identified at national, regional, local level, and their associations, representative of the eligible metropolitan areas involved as Lead Applicant/ financing Project Partner within the same project proposal?</p>	<p>Exclusion of the project financing partner if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In case of national and regional bodies: the Project Partner is not located in one NUTS 1 or NUTS 2 region of an ERDF/IPA Partner State of the Programme; - In case of local body(s): Project Partner is not located in one of the eligible metropolitan areas; - It reveals being a private body; - In case of public / body governed by public law as Project Partner: the requested competent public authority is not involved within the same project proposal as Lead Applicant/Project Partner. <p>Rejection of the project proposal in case the exclusion of such partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.</p>

2	Reference to the Application Form section or other document	Eligibility criteria	Eligibility questions	Consequence on failure
2.4	Application Form, section A1 first table; Lead Applicant and Project Partner declarations	Secured national co-financing	Is the amount of the national co-financing indicated in the Lead Applicant declaration equal or higher the amount of the national contribution indicated in the Application Form?	Rejection of the project proposal
			Is the amount of the national co-financing indicated in the Project Partners' declaration equal or higher the amount of the national contribution indicated in the Application Form?	Exclusion of Project Partner(s). Rejection of the project proposal in case the exclusion of such Project Partner(s) leads to non-fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.
2.5	Application Form, section A1, table <i>Project budget - overview ERDF and IPA co-financing per budget line</i>	Requested EU co-financing within the fixed threshold	Is budget line staff cost not higher than 50% of the total project budget?	Rejection of the project proposal.
			Do Project Partners cooperate in all the following compulsory ways: joint development, joint implementation and joint financing?	Rejection of the project proposal
2.6	Application Form, section C.1.4	Project Partners jointly cooperate	Do Project Partners cooperate in all the following compulsory ways: joint development, joint implementation and joint financing?	Rejection of the project proposal

Annex 4– Quality Criteria- Priority Axes 1 and 3

Strategic criteria

Criterion and sub-criterion numbering	Sub-criterion	
3.1	Project context	MAX 20 points
3.1.a	How well does the project adhere to the set requirements, including the mandatory topics/activities?	Max 5 points
3.1.b	How well does the project make use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices in the thematic domain addressed? Whenever applicable, reference shall be made to previous project experiences under ETC or any other financing instruments.	Max 5 points
3.1.c	How well do project expected results contribute to EU/national/regional policies and/or strategies other than EUSAIR in the thematic domain(s) addressed by the project?	Max 5 points
3.1.d	How well does the project contribute to the Programme horizontal principles: equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women, sustainable development, environmental issues? How does the project position itself with regard to the pre-defined environmental topics?	Max 5 points
3.2	Cooperation character	MAX 20 points
3.2.a	How well is the need of a transnational approach addressed to the topic? Can the results (or only to some extent) be achieved without transnational cooperation and/or does the transnational cooperation have a significant added value for the partners and territories involved, going beyond the scope of both cross-border cooperation and local initiatives?	Max 5 points
3.2.b	Are project resources and activities balanced with respect to the Programme area? Is the project balanced with respect to levels, sectors and territories?	Max 5 points
3.2.c	Are the compulsory and optional ways of cooperation clearly described and consistent with the distribution of tasks and budget between partners?	Max 5 points

	Have they been clearly mirrored in the Work Packages?	
3.2.d	Is there a clear benefit from cooperating for the Project Partners / target groups / project area / Programme area / Partner States? Are types of territories/regions/countries represented by the partners relevant in respect to the project topic?	Max 5 points
3.3	Project's contribution to Programme's objectives, expected results and outputs	MAX 20 points
3.3.a	Do project's results and main outputs clearly link to Programme priority and its indicators? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project overall objective clearly links to a Programme specific objective; - The project results clearly link to a Programme result indicator; - The project specific objectives clearly link to the project overall objective; - The project main outputs clearly link to the project specific objectives; - The project main outputs clearly link to Programme output indicators. - Does the project proposal intend to contribute to the realization of at least 2 outputs as described in the Cooperation Programme? 	Max 5 points
3.3.b	How well the project demonstrates new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/Programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions?	Max 5 points
3.3.c	Are results and main outputs clearly described, specific and realistic?	Max 5 points
3.3.d	Are project main outputs durable (i.e.: the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the challenges targeted)? Is financial, institutional and political sustainability ensured? If not, is there a proper justification? To which extent are project main outputs replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (transferability)? If not, is there a proper justification?	Max 5 points
3.4	Partnership relevance	MAX 20 points

<p>3.4.a</p> <p>(information reported in the Application Form and in the Lead Applicant/ financing Project Partner declaration)</p>	<p>Does the project involve the relevant actors as project financing partners to address the goals of the identified topics?</p> <p>Are further key actors involved in a meaningful way even if not involved as financing partners (reference to Associated Partners)?</p>	<p>Max 5 points</p>
<p>3.4.b</p> <p>(information reported in the Application Form and in the Lead Applicant/ financing Project Partner declaration)</p>	<p>With respect to the project's objectives the project partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is consistent in size and composition with the activities to implement and outputs to achieve? - Does it consist of partners that complement each other? 	<p>Max 5 points</p>
<p>3.4.c</p> <p>(information reported in the Application Form and in the Lead applicant/ financing Project Partner declaration)</p>	<p>Does the partnership as a whole and does each partner have proven experience and competence in the thematic field concerned to achieve the envisaged outputs and expected results?</p> <p>Do they have the necessary capacity to implement the project (financial, human resources, etc.; i.e.: none of the partners has managing tasks only)?</p>	<p>Max 5 points</p>
<p>3.4.d</p>	<p>Do all involved financing Project Partners play a defined role in the partnership and get a real benefit from it?</p>	<p>Max 5 points</p>
		<p>MAX 80 points</p>

Operational criteria

Criterion and sub-criterion numbering	Sub-criterion	
5.1	Management	MAX 20 points
5.1.a (information reported in the Application Form and in the Lead Applicant declaration)	Is the Lead Partner experienced in complex project management and capable of coordinating the transnational partnership? Can it ensure an efficient management support?	Max 5 points
5.1.b	How well the foreseen management structures (e.g.: project steering committee, project coordination unit) are proportionate to the partnership and project size and needs and allow partners' involvement in decision-making?	Max 5 points
5.1.c	How well project management risks have been identified and mitigation measures foreseen?	Max 5 points
5.1.d	How well have the management procedures (such as reporting and evaluation procedures in the area of finance, project content, communication) been defined in a clear, transparent, efficient and effective way? Does project management include regular contacts between Project Partners and ensures transfer of expertise across the partnership (internal communication within the partnership)?	Max 5 points
5.2	Communication	MAX 20 points
5.2.a	Are the communication objectives clearly linked to the project specific objectives? How well the communication activities are coherently integrated in the overall project strategy?	Max 5 points
5.2.b	Are the approach/tactics chosen appropriate to reach communication objectives?	Max 5 points
5.2.c	To which extent are the proposed information and dissemination activities able to achieve visibility among relevant target groups and stakeholders (e.g. the relevant target groups are clearly defined and cover the entire project area? The general approach towards each group is described through relevant channels, tailored activities, etc.)?	Max 5 points
5.2.d	How well does the project make provisions for feedback mechanisms and evaluation measures for the communication activities?	Max 5 points

5.3	Work plan	MAX 20 points
5.3.a	Is the planned approach suitable to obtain the intended outputs and results?	Max 5 points
5.3.b	Are the work plan and timing of activities, deliverables and outputs realistic, consistent and transparent? Is the overall project duration realistic to achieve the foreseen outputs? Do activities outside (the Union part of) the Programme area clearly benefit the Programme area?	Max 5 points
5.3.c	Are tasks and roles of each partner clearly described? How well is the distribution of tasks among partners appropriate to their respective expertise (e.g. sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with partners' role in the project, etc.)?	Max 5 points
5.3.d	How well are activities, deliverables and outputs in a logical time-sequence? Is the time plan realistic and have any potential difficulties (contingencies) been correctly assessed?	Max 5 points
5.4	Budget	MAX 20 points
5.4.a	Are planned resources reasonable to ensure project implementation? Does the project clearly describe how resources will be used and does it ensure a logic correlation between planned resources and planned activities/deliverables?	Max 5 points
5.4.b	Is the project budget proportionate to the proposed work plan, main outputs and results aimed for? Are different budget lines in line with the recommendations of the Programme?	Max 5 points
5.4.c	Are planned resources coherently distributed among Project Partners? Are the partners' budgets in line with their respective role in project activities for each Work Package?	Max 5 points
5.4.d	Is the budget clear and realistic? To which extent are in line: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The financial allocation per budget line is with the work plan? ▪ The distribution of the budget per period with the work plan? ▪ The distribution of the budget per Work Package with the work plan? To which extent is justified the foreseen expenditure per budget line?	Max 5 points
		MAX 80 points

