

Interreg V- B Adriatic- Ionian Programme – ADRION 2014 -2020

Announcement of the Third call for proposals for Priority Axis 1 “*Innovative and Smart Region*”

1. Introduction

The Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian 2014-2020 (hereinafter ADRION), set up in the framework of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) - one of the objectives of the cohesion policy - is launching its third call for proposals for Priority Axis 1 and invites all interested eligible public applicants to submit project proposals.

The overall objective of the ADRION Programme is to act as a policy driver and governance innovator fostering European integration among Partner States, 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.

The ADRION Programme comprises 4 EU Partner States and 4 non-EU Partner States, namely:

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 Aigaiio; Notio Aigaiio; 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.**

The detailed conditions for the third call for proposals for Priority Axis 1 can be found in the following documents, altogether referred to as “*Application package third call for Priority Axis 1*”, which constitutes

an integral part of this call announcement and are available for download (as separated documents or as a single zipped file) from the Programme website www.interregadrion.eu:

- ADRION Cooperation Programme adopted by the European Commission with Decision C (2015) 7147;
- Programme Manual Third calls for proposals - Priority Axes 1 and 3;
- Off-line application form and annexes;
- Applicants' Guidelines on the use of electronic monitoring system (e-MS).

2. Thematic Focus

The third call for proposals on Priority Axis 1 is focused on 2 targeted topics, which have been selected on the basis of their strategic relevance for both the ADRION Programme and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region - EUSAIR.

The third call for proposals on Priority Axis 1 is open only to the following two topics indicated below:

1. Topic 1: Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) on Blue Growth;
2. Topic 2: Social Innovation.

A project proposal must refer to one topic only. The missing indication of the topic to which the project proposal refers to will bring to the exclusion of the project proposal (eligibility criterion).

Interested applicants are required to follow the main technical elements characterising the selected topic as indicated below when drafting their project proposal:

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

Overall goal

The overall goal 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. 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.

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.

Structure of the project proposal

Project proposals are required to pursue the implementation of the following activities considered to be as compulsory, in addition to the compulsory Work Packages – WP - (Management and Communication):

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.).

Partnership requirements

EU financing is only provided to financing Project Partners located in the ADRION Programme area. Each project must involve at least 6 financing Project Partners from 6 different Partner States of the Programme area, 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 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 exclusion of the project proposal.

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

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

Eligible financing Project Partners

The eligible financing partners are the following:

- Public authorities at national or regional level competent for the addressed topic;
- Bodies governed by public law and public bodies competent for the addressed topic 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 exception of the “*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.

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 National Contact Point.

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.

Lead Applicant

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

Only the following bodies located in the ERDF Partner States shall be considered as eligible Lead Applicants:

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

Topic 2: Social Innovation

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.

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 social entrepreneurship through development of skills and entrepreneurship competences;
- The enhancing the cooperation among different actors dealing with social services of general interest.

Structure of the project proposal

Project proposals are required to pursue the implementation of the following activities considered to be as compulsory, in addition to the compulsory Work Packages – WP - Management and Communication:

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.

Partnership requirements

EU financing is only provided to financing Project Partners located in the ADRION Programme area. Each project proposal must involve at least 6 financing Project Partners from 6 different Partner States of the Programme area, out of them:

- At least 4 financing Project Partners – including the Lead Applicant- from 4 different ERDF Partner States;
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MA/JS reserve the right to verify the correctness of the provided information.

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

Eligible financing Project Partners

The eligible financing Project Partners are the following:

- Public authorities at national or regional level competent for the addressed topics;
- Bodies governed by public law and public bodies competent for the addressed topic 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 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 exception of the "*Assimilated partners*");
- Be endowed with legal personality.

In addition to what above, eligible financing Project 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;

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 National Contact Point.

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.

Lead Applicant

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

Only the following bodies located in the ERDF Partner States shall be considered as eligible Lead Applicant:

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

3. Common provisions

3.1 Time schedule and submission

The third call for proposal for Priority Axis 1 will be open from **20 May 2019 h: 15:00 (CEST time) to 29 July 2019 - h: 15:00 (CEST time)** and will follow a single step procedure, i.e. full Application Form and requested supporting documents will have to be submitted by the indicated deadline.

Project proposals must be submitted in English language and only through the web-based electronic monitoring system (e-MS) available at www.interregadrion.eu

The Lead Applicant need to be registered on the e-MS system to be able to create and submit valid application forms.

The Lead Applicant shall be in charge for the submission of the Application on behalf of its partnership.

The application package for the third call for proposals for Priority Axis 1 also contains the off-line template of the Application Form for information purposes only. The only valid Application Form will be the one created and submitted via the e-MS.

Full information on the application and selection procedure is detailed in the chapter "*Procedure for submission and selection of project proposals*" of the Programme Manual.

3.2 Budget available

ADRION programme will allocate up to **EUR 5.305.767,20** of EU contribution to the third call for proposals for Priority Axis 1, broken down in ERDF and IPA funds as follows:

Priority Axis 1	ERDF	IPA ¹	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

The above mentioned amounts are indicative; the Monitoring Committee of the ADRION programme reserves the right not to commit all available resources, depending on the quality of submitted applications.

Upon completion of the assessment, the submitted applications will be ranked and will be co-financed according to the EU resources available.

3.3 Project size

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

Projects are warmly recommended to define their respective budget following the ratio between ERDF and IPA funds 85:15 as available in this Priority Axis of the Programme.

3.4 Co-financing rate

ADRION contribution will be limited to a co-financing rate up to 85% of eligible costs for all financing Project 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 sources.

In case applicants intend to implement activities being considered as State Aid relevant, the maximum grant will be calculated applying the *de minimis rule* while respecting the co-financing percentage above.

3.5 Project duration

As far as the third call for proposals is concerned, the project duration shall be up to a maximum of 30 months, starting from the date indicated in the approved application form.

3.6 Selection of projects

The assessment of the application is coordinated by the Managing Authority and performed by the Joint Secretariat, with the support of the National Contact Points and eventually of external experts.

¹ 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.

In order to ensure equal, fair and transparent approach, the project proposals are assessed according to a set of criteria previously elaborated by the Programme, approved by the Monitoring Committee and detailed below:

Admissibility and Eligibility checks (ref. to Programme Manual Third Call for proposals – Annex 2): are aimed at verifying the respect of all formal and substantial minimum conditions of eligibility

Only those proposals having positively passed the admissibility and eligibility checks will be progressed to the assessment of their quality.

Qualitative evaluation (ref. to Programme Manual Third Call for proposals – Annex 4): is performed according to a list of criteria and is aimed at assessing their degree of fulfilment by each project proposal and is divided into two steps:

1. *Strategic assessment* - 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.

The appraisal criteria shall be:

- Project's context (relevance and strategy);
- The cooperation character;
- Project's contribution to Programme's objectives, expected results and outputs;
- Partnership relevance.

Each criterion is composed of several sub-criteria measured according to scores (1-5).

Only those project proposals having reached a minimum score as for their strategic value will be progressed to the assessment of their operational value.

2. *Operational assessment* - 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 versus results delivered.

The appraisal criteria shall be:

- Management;
- Communication;
- Work plan;
- Budget.

Each criterion is composed of several sub-criteria measured according to scores (1-5).

A minimum quality threshold will be applied also to the operational value of project proposals.

Overall evaluation of proposals will result from summing up the evaluation scores of strategic and operational assessments.

3.7 Additional information and support

More information regarding ADRION Programme, conditions for the submission of project proposals, assessment of proposals, the application package as well as other relevant information is available at www.interregadrion.eu.

Interested applicants are warmly invited to get in contact with the representatives of the National Contact Points located in each ADRION Partner State, as well as with the Joint Secretariat based in Bologna (Italy). Contact information is also available on the programme website.