

Interreg V- B Adriatic- Ionian Transnational Programme – ADRION 2014 -2020
Announcement of the Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals
on
Priority Axis 1 “*Innovative and Smart Region*” and Priority Axis 2 “*Sustainable Region*”

1. Introduction

The Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian Transnational Programme 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 Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals addressed to Priority Axis 1 and 2 and invites all interested eligible 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 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.

The detailed conditions for the Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals devoted to Priority Axis 1 and Priority Axis 2 can be found in the following documents, altogether referred to as “*Application package Fifth*”

Extraordinary call for proposals”, 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 Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals - Priority Axes 1 and 2;
- Off-line application form (for information purposes);
- Declarations templates;
- Applicants’ Guidelines on the use of electronic monitoring system (e-MS) (for information purposes).

2. Thematic Focus

The overall goal of the Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals is to **raise competences and skills in domains considered of strategic relevance for the Adriatic-Ionian programme area, bridging to the new programming period**, and ideally **progressing in its path of sustaining marine/maritime, environmental and social innovation topics**.

The Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals is open **only to the following topics**:

- **Topic 1: Blue Economy**
- **Topic 2: Social Innovation**
- **Topic 3: Renewable Energy**
- **Topic 4: Circular Economy**

Project proposals submitted under Topics 1 and 2 will be funded in the framework of the Priority Axis 1, whereas the project proposals submitted under Topics 3 and 4 will be funded under the Priority Axis 2.

A project proposal must refer only to one of the above topics of the 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).

The Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals is focused on some of the topics of strategic relevance for both the ADRION Programme and the EUSAIR Macro-regional strategy and shall contribute to bridge the current to the new programming period.

It will also contribute to prepare the ground for further cooperation between EU and IPA countries and encourage the effective use of future EU funds in the domain of research and innovation.

The implementation of the joint master programmes accredited by the respective universities will take place in the 2021-2027 programming period and will get further financial support; the projects successfully complying with the goals of the present call shall be considered as strategic and granted in the 2021-2027 IPA ADRION Programme.

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

Structure of the project proposal

In addition to the Work Package Management – which will also includes Communication activities – at least the following activities listed below must be included in the compulsory Work Packages (WP):

WPT1 – Networking and implementation of Education and Training Programme concept

- Setting in place a network of universities/faculties, research institutions and business partners working together on skills' enhancement and capacity building in the thematic domain selected.
- Organisation and implementation of training courses, summer schools or any other educational form either individually or jointly to prepare and promote the future master on the thematic domain selected. These activities must involve at least 25 persons per country.
- Exchange of experience, best practices, staff exchange and mutual learning processes for the definition of the joint master and curricula, as well as its functioning.

For their implementation the following elements can be considered:

- different settings - on-line/classroom sessions, boot camps, work-based sessions, summer schools; study visits;
- formats - part-time, full-time, formal education and training, open learning;
- methods - webinars/online events and workshops, peer-to-peer learning, exchange of experience, including short-term staff exchange between partners.

The work package must include, per each involved partner, at least 1 representative responsible for the development of each of the sub-points above.

WPT2 – Definition of a joint master degree on the thematic domain selected

- Definition of a joint master to be realized by the universities network. The joint master must be conceived in a way that participants shall have the chance of attending a specific university for some courses/modules (at least 50% of the total master duration) and another participating university for other courses/modules and/or professors shall be hosted by other universities. The joint master must foresee the students' mobility in at least two different universities and in one business partner/research institution.
- Joint master must include agreed language policy and a mechanism for recognition of study periods within the partnership. Additionally, the partnership must develop joint students' admission requirements and selection procedures. Students' support services must also be envisaged (e.g. support in obtaining visa).
- Definition of the university path and of the mobility scheme, in cooperation with business partner(s)/research institution(s), addressed to the identified target groups. The partnership must describe how the cooperation with business partner(s) or research institution(s) is organised and for which purpose.

3. Partnership requirements

The project partnership of each project proposal must be composed by:

- At least **5 Universities/Faculties** coming from at least **5 different ADRION Partner States** (out of which at least **3 from 3 different ERDF Partner States** and at least **2 from two different IPA Partner States**).
- At least **1 business partner** (e.g.: SMEs) and/or **research institution** with specific expertise on the chosen topic, whose legal and operational seats are based in the ADRION programme area

A public university/faculty may be lead applicant in only one project proposal.

A university/faculty can be project partner in no more than 3 project proposals.

In case an infringement of the requirements above is detected, the eligibility of the 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.

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.

Eligible financing partners

The eligible financing partners must be:

- Universities/faculties located in ERDF or IPA II Partner States;
- Business institutions;
- Research institutions with specific expertise in relation to the chosen topic.

In addition to their competence to the selected topic, they must be:

- Public or private 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;
- 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;
- Be endowed with legal personality.

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 a university/faculty located in an ERDF Partner State; it may be a public body or a body governed by public law.

Other forms of participation within the projects – associated partners

The 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.

Associated partners may be universities, research, business bodies and any other institutions located in the ADRION programme area and considered as relevant for the selected topic. By a way of exception, to ease the bridging to ADRION programming period 2021-2027 and its enlarged geographical area, associated partners from San Marino and North Macedonia are encouraged to participate.

4. Common provisions

4.1 Time schedule and submission

The Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals will be open from **7 June 2022 (h: 10:00) to 08 July 2022 (h: 15:00) – CEST time** and will follow a single step procedure, i.e. full Application Form and requested supporting documents shall 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.

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 Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals also contains the off-line template of 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 operations*” of the Programme Manual.

4.2 Budget available

The ADRION programme will allocate up to **EUR 4.000.000,00** EU contribution to the Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals, out of which EUR 3.000.000,00 ERDF and EUR 1.000.000,00 IPA II funds according to the following breakdown per Priority Axis:

	ERDF	IPA	Total EU contribution (85%)	National contribution (15%)	Total funding (EU contribution. + national contribution)
Priority Axis 1	1.500.000,00	500.000,00 ¹	2.000.000,00	352.941,18	2.352.941,18
Priority Axis 2	1.500.000,00	500.000,00	2.000.000,00	352.941,18	2.352.941,18
TOTAL	3.000.000,00	1.000.000,00	4.000.000,00	705.882,35	4.705.882,36

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

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

4.3 Project size

Projects submitted within the framework of the ADRION Programme Fifth Extraordinary call for proposals shall have an EU contribution (ERDF + IPAII) up to a maximum **EUR 1.000.000,00** out of which up to **EUR 750.000,00 (ERDF)** and up to **EUR 250.000,00 (IPAII)**.

4.4 Co-financing rate

ADRION EU contribution will be limited to a co-financing rate up to 85% of eligible costs for all funding partners (i.e.: both benefitting from ERDF and IPA II contribution). The share of expenditure (at least 15%) not covered by ERDF or IPA II funds shall be ensured by national co-financing sources.

4.5 Project duration

As far as the fifth extraordinary call for proposals is concerned, the project activities shall start their implementation as from 1 October 2022 at the latest and end no later than 30 June 2023.

4.6 Selection of projects

The assessment of the application is coordinated by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat which will supervise a pool of experts. The National Contact Points shall support with the direct verification of some requirements of the project partners.

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:

¹ IPA II amount includes 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.

Admissibility and Eligibility checks (ref. to Programme Manual Fifth Extraordinary Call for proposals – assessment of the applications): 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 Fifth Extraordinary Call for proposals – assessment of the applications): is performed according to a list of criteria assessing the partnership quality, 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 quality assessment shall be performed in accordance with the following criteria::

- Partnership
- Management (including Communication);
- Work plan;
- Budget.

The overall project score will result from the total attributed scores to each criterion.

Project proposals shall also be subject to further verifications (anti-fraud checks and exclusion of presence of double funding).

4.7 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.