

Interreg IPA CBC Italy–Albania–Montenegro Programme

PROGRAMME MANUAL

2.2 Project assessment

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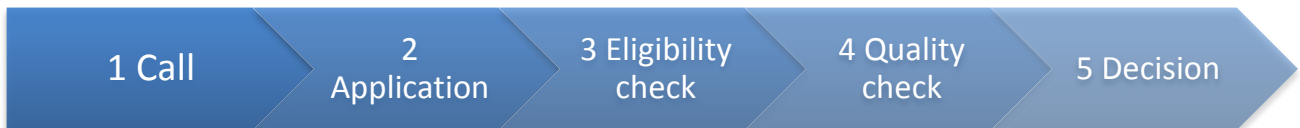


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Introduction

This factsheet has the objective to inform all interested stakeholders about the key steps for the selection of standard projects. It summarises the assessment methodology approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee and it provides an overview on all milestones from the call to the funding decision, with a special focus on simplification and transparency measures adopted.



1. 1ST CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS

The first call for standard project proposals was published on 16/03/2017 on the “calls” section of the website, where all relevant documents may be found: <http://www.europuglia.it/cte-2014-2020/it-al-me/bandi>

1.1 Simplification measures

In order to simplify the application procedure, the call package included also an applicant guide and a single template for partners declaration, including all necessary self-assessment statements by the partners. It included also offline versions of the application form and budget table, to be used for preparation purposes by the applicants.

The call was open from 16/03/2017 to 30/05/2017 but upon decision of the Joint Monitoring Committee the submission deadline was postponed to 30/05/2017, in order to provide applicants with more time to develop their partnerships and projects.

1.2 Transparency measures

In order to ensure the maximum publicity, the call was published at <http://www.europuglia.it/cte-2014-2020/it-al-me/bandi> and in the Official journal of the Managing Authority (<http://www.regione.puglia.it/documents/10192/8992431/DET7.pdf/5726d35d-83ad-4633-a85b-7b6b483d2875?version=1.0>), on the websites of the Ministry of European Integration of Albania (www.integrimi.gov.al) and of the Ministry of European Affairs of Montenegro (www.mep.gov.me), as well as recalled by a wide range of national and local newspapers and publications.

Social media such as Facebook were widely used to inform potential applicants.

Moreover, the calls were promoted in five major events, in which not only the calls were presented, but thematic workshops were held to gather partners on the four priority axes and facilitate the building up of partnerships:

- Bari, 6 March 2017, total number of participants: 700;
- Tirana, 15 March 2017, total number of participants: 250;
- Podgorica, 17 March 2017, total number of participants: 250;
- Lecce, 4 April 2017, total number of participants: 150;
- Campobasso, 11 April 2017, total number of participants: 150.

2. APPLICATION

2.1 Simplification measures

To simplify application procedures, project proposals had to be submitted only in electronic version in the electronic system of the programme:

<https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/ems/app/main?execution=e1s1>.

The scanned version of official documents, such as statutes, identity documents, signed declaration etc. were accepted¹.

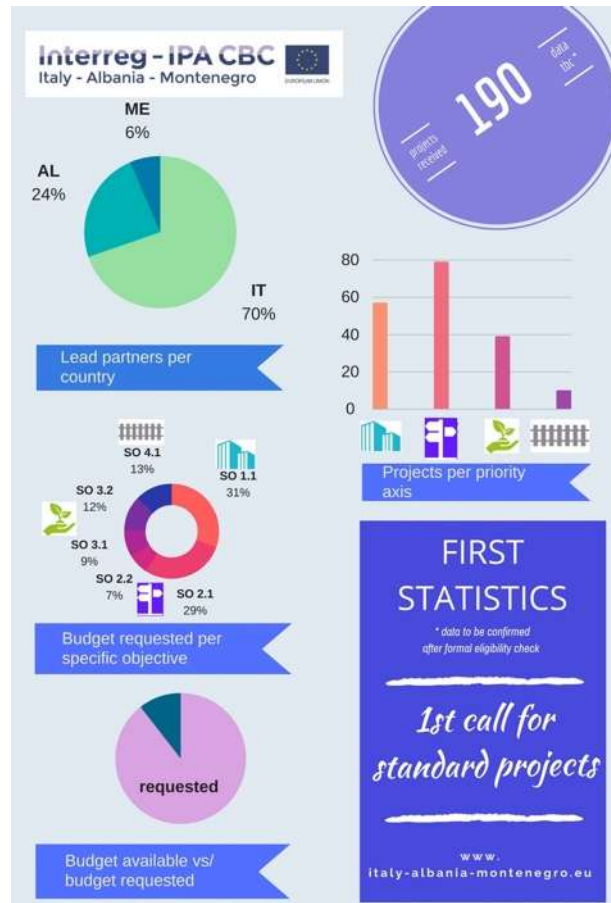
During the application period, once a week, interested applicants could participate in Open Days meetings at the premises of the Joint Secretariat, in order to discuss the call requirements and receive guidance and support.

A platform for thematic partner search was open on the website, in order to allow applicants to share their partners search.

The help desk js@italy-albania-montenegro.eu was open and all replies were published in the FAQ documents in the webpage, updated every week on the basis of the questions received.

The processing capacity of the electronic system (eMS) was increased during the end phase, in order to allow many concurrent users until the very last minute of submission and no major bottleneck for the overwhelming majority of applicants occurred.

This is confirmed by the fact that more than 96% of project applicants were able to submit their project within the deadline.



¹ The on-the-spot verifications by national controllers and auditors may also require the proof of the authenticity of the documentation scanned.

3. ELIGIBILITY CHECK

3.1 Simplification measures

Between May and July 2017, the eligibility check was performed according to the eligibility criteria set in the call by 4 independent officers of the Joint Secretariat, and the National Info Points (NIPs), i.e. the Albanian NIP and the Montenegrin NIP for related national partners. To reduce error risk, at the Joint Secretariat a four eye principle applied, i.e. each project was assessed by two different officers (two officers for P.A. 1 and 4, two officers for P.A. 2 and 3). Only projects fulfilling all of the criteria, including e.g. aspects of the legal status and complete documentation, were admitted to the quality assessment.

However, in order to give a further support to partners and to avoid rejecting projects for pure administrative-formal issues, the Managing Authority proposed and the Joint Monitoring Committee agreed on a series of errors, which could have been corrected by the applicants within a certain period of time.

As a result of this step, out of 190 project applications, 145 projects were admitted to the quality assessment.

Moreover, rejected applicants could ask for clarifications, according to the revision claim procedure, set by the programme.

4. QUALITY CHECK

4.1 Transparency measures

Between September and October 2017, the 145 project proposals were assessed in all their parts and according to each of the criteria set in the call by four independent officers (applying four eyes principle), two in the Joint Secretariat plus the Albanian and Montenegrin National Info Point. The NIPs, in particular, focused their assessment on the compliance with the project with the own national and regional strategies, with the territorial needs and the financial and managerial capacity of the partners involved.

The impartiality of project assessors was confirmed by a formal impartiality declaration and was supervised by the Coordinator of the Joint Secretariat, the Managing Authority, as well as by the National Authorities for the NIPs.

Even though the involvement of external experts for scientific, technical, engineering aspects of project proposals would have been possible if needed, it was not necessary in this call, as sufficient competence was available to assess the projects content.

As a result of this, a score grid was shared with Joint Steering Committee, nominated by the Joint Monitoring Committee among national and territorial representatives with a consultative function, i.e. with the specific task to confirm the compliance of the projects with the territorial needs and the national strategies, as well as the relevance of the partnerships, in order to formulate a proposal for decision for the Joint Monitoring Committee.

The Joint Steering Committee, in its meeting in Bari on 6 November 2017, substantially confirmed the technical assessment by the JS and the NIPs, while at the same time suggesting minor changes to the Joint Monitoring Committee, based on major territorial impacts expected from some project activities.

5. FUNDING DECISION

5.1 Simplification measures

In its meeting in Lecce on 23 November 2017 the Joint Monitoring Committee approved the score grid, taking into account both the technical advice of the JS/NIPs and the policy advice of the Joint Steering Committee. As a result, a joint score grid was published, containing all projects assessed in their quality, the resulting score and the indication that projects at the top of the score grid may be financed as long as budget is available.

Taking into account the quality of project proposals, the JMC decided to increase the financial allocation of priority axes 1 and 2. At the same time, it gave the mandate to the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat to negotiate a revision of project work plan, as to optimize their activities and budgets. Reduction of budgets were foreseen in order to scroll down the score grid and finance additional projects as far as budget was made available.

5.2 Transparency measures

The negotiations were held between January and February 2018 and they led to a general optimization on the projects, thanks to the guidance provided by the Joint Secretariat to the project partners.

The general public was kept informed through projects charts used on social media, aimed at raising awareness on the content of projects.

In order to allow for transparent information to rejected partners, the programme activated a possibility to request access to the documentation related to the assessment and funding decision, as well as a complaint procedure.

