# Interreg - IPA CBC
## Italy - Albania - Montenegro

**FACTSHEET**

**Interreg IPA CBC**

**Italy–Albania–Montenegro Programme**

# PROGRAMME MANUAL

*4.5    Project communication*

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## *Introduction*

Communication has a strategic function in cross-border programmes and is the key to project success. It helps to build strong relationships with stakeholders and is aimed at informing target audiences, raising awareness and knowledge on project activities, and improving attitudes towards a project and its results.

Communication supports the achievement of the project and programme objectives; to be efficient it needs time, resources and constant commitment.

Beneficiaries of the Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme (IT-AL-ME Programme) should therefore integrate communication at the core of their project, and link communication objectives to project outputs and results. To do so, they need to plan and implement their communication activities strategically.

Chapter 1 of this factsheet provides guidance on how to develop a project communication strategy focused on project objectives and results.

Chapter 2 focuses on the formal requirements that all projects have to follow when implementing communication activities.

Chapter 3 links to the Visual Identity Manual for Italy-Albania-Montenegro Projects and provides guidance on project logos and branding.

Chapter 4 links to EU regulations and programme documents related to communication activities.

## 1. PROJECT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY & PLAN

A communication strategy is the bible of project communications. It ensures that communication efforts help to achieve the projects's goals, and that they are coordinated and effective. It also helps to clarify what staff, time and resources are needed and how to use them.

Developing and deploying an integrated Communication Strategy and Plan, is what gives context and meaning to messages and actions. A strategy answers the question of 'why' and 'what'; a plan answers the question of 'how'. First determine the strategy that serves the project goals, then draft the plan that supports the strategy, and fix the processes that enable the plan.

Already in the application phase, projects are asked to lay down what they aim for with communication activities and how the partnership intends to achieve these targets. Based on information provided in the application forms, all approved projects will have to present the MA/JS the project's Communication Strategy & Plan, preferably when submitting their first progress report. *

In this document, projects shall provide detailed information on target audiences, expected results, approaches, activities, budget and result indicators. The sharing of tasks and responsibilities among the partnership as well as the implementation timeline also have to be described.

**\* EXCEPTION FOR SMALL SCALE PROJECTS**

Small Scale Projects are not required to submit to the MA/JS a Communication Strategy & Plan. However, they should identify the communication activities foreseen during project implementation and share them with their partners.

Therefore, the appointment of a Communication Manager is not required, but the tasks may be assigned to the Project Manager.

## 1.1 First step: analyse and discuss!

Before drafting the project communication strategy:

- *Be aware of the legal basis of Interreg communication* (see Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 (Art. 111 (4b), from 115 to 117, and Annex II)
- *Review your project objectives and priorities*. Understanding the overall project aims is key to identify how communication will be organised. Read the project document; prepare an introduction about the project and include it in the strategy.
- *Do a SWOT analysis of the project regarding communication*. Identify: 1) Strengths: what have we got that we can use? 2) Weaknesses: what could damage our reputation? 3) Opportunities: what could we capitalise upon? 4) Threats: what might go wrong?
- *Involve the project's management team in setting up the strategy*. Hold internal consultations with your partners and project representatives. Inform them of your SWOT findings, and involve them in SWOT analysis process.

## 1.2 Second step: get the full story!

The 5 Ws + 1 H are questions whose answers are considered basic in information gathering or problem solving. They constitute a formula for getting the complete story on a subject and can be used in drafting the project's communication strategy.

➢ WHO is involved?          - institutions, partners, associates

➢ WHAT happens?          - features, activities, outputs

➢ WHERE does it take place?     - regions, countries, communities

➢ WHEN does it take place?     - planning, timing of activities

➢ WHY does it happen?        - needs, objectives, results

➢ HOW to make it happen?      - strategies, tactics, approach

## 1.3   Third step: develop the strategy, and plan activities!

Here are some tips for successful project communication.

- *Set goals, approach, tactics*: goal-oriented communication; tailor-made approach; key-messages; coherent, integrated actions; widespread diffusion; visible and tangible results.
- *Define "SMART" objectives*: Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Result-focused; Time-bound.
- *Reach wide audiences*: internal targets (project partners, programme MA/JS); external targets (stakeholders, press & media, local communities, specific targets)
- *Integrate communications*: plan activities in different areas: a) institutional communication; b) PR & Media Relations; c) Marketing communications.
- *Manage the schedule and budget*: detailed planning/timing of activities for each area, and budget estimate.
- *Measure and evaluate*: feedback mechanisms and measures for evaluation of communication activities.
- *Capitalize on results*: knowledge capture, lessons learnt, exploitation/capitalization of project results.

## 1.4   Fourth step: collaborate and report!

Planning and implementing the Communication Strategy & Plan should be treated as a horizontal project management task. The whole partnership has to be involved and the leader of the communication work package shall be responsible for building the partners' communication capacity and for coordinating the implementation and quality management of communication measures.

All approved projects *(except for Small Scale Projects)* must submit to the MA/JS a concise Communication Strategy & Plan together with the first progress report. Annual communication work plans have to be developed and agreed on within the partnership. Progress on communication must be checked and reported by the work package leader every six months prior to submitting progress reports to the programme.

Detailed guidance on strategic communication planning and implementation will be offered by the JS to lead partners and project communication managers at training seminars for approved projects.

A template for drafting the project Communication Strategy & Plan is available in the section TOOLS of the Programme web portal (https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/tools/visual-identity). Check the zipped folders PA1 / PA2 / PA3 / PA4  Project Templates for files customized with project visual identity.

### 1.5  Last but not least: use plain language!

To set direction, your message must be clear. Apply the KISS principle: Keep It Short and Simple. Use plain language, keep descriptions short, and avoid redundant pages. Plain language increases efficiency, and reduces the need for clarification.

Here are some tips:

1) Know your audience
2) Organize your thoughts
3) Summarize main points
4) Write short sentences and paragraphs
5) Use every day phrases and words
6) Avoid bureaucratic language
7) Use strong subjects and verbs
8) Define uncommon terms
9) Use headings, lists, and tables
10) Revise, proofread, finalize!

Remember: *"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough."* (Albert Einstein).

## 2.  COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

The EU and Programme requirements for projects' communication are listed below. Only correct application of these requirements ensures the co-financing of communication activities by the Programme.

### 2.1  Project logo

Interreg cooperation programmes across Europe have agreed to widely harmonise their brands in the programming period 2014-2020. Harmonisation is based on a jointly developed Interreg logo and aims at increasing the visibility and recognition of Interreg funds and results.

The IT-AL-ME Programme has joined the "Joint Branding" initiative developed by Interact, and extends this harmonisation to all funded projects.  The idea is to unite all projects under the same graphics, while still providing a possible customization. This will facilitate branding, reduce costs and help to raise awareness on activities and results reached with IPA funding.

In line with the above, the IT-AL-ME Programme will provide projects with a basic logo integrated into the Programme logo.

Specifically, projects can choose one of the following options:

- a basic logo with the project name - provided by the JS, free of charge;
- a customized logo with a design element - to be developed and paid by the project.

If projects accept the first option, they don't need to create their own logo, but shall provide for the design of the project's visual identity and of communication materials (in line with the Programme Visual Identity).

If projects choose to develop a customized logo, they may add different elements to the basic project logo or change its layout. Customized logos are neither required, nor necessary unless the customized logo meets specific communication and marketing needs. In fact, this option is suitable only for specific projects - such as the ones related to territorial marketing, supply of tourist products/services, etc. - which require a distinctive brand. In this case, projects have to design both logo, as well as communication materials, in line with the Programme Visual Identity. Project partners shall contact the JS in *advance* to discuss if this customization is needed.

The project logo must be featured on all promotional material, presentations, print material, or any other communication activity organized within the project. The design rules outlined in the Programme Visual Identity Manual must always be followed. (https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2018-10/181001_IT-AL-ME_Visual_Identity_Manual.pdf)

## 2.2 Use of other logos

If other logos are displayed on communication materials in addition to the project logo, the European Union emblem (i.e. the EU flag in the IT-AL-ME logo) shall have at least the same size, measured in height or width, as the biggest of the other logos (article 4 point 5 of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 821/2014 of 28 July 2014).

## 2.3 IPA funding reference

The reference to the IPA funding for 2014/2020 is already included in the Programme/project logo, therefore it's not necessary to mention it in all communication and promotional materials.

However, to provide further visibility to the EU funding, in some cases (e.g. project website, researches, publications on project themes, billboards/plaques) it is advised to display the following statement, acknowledging the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) as a co-financing source, together with the EU emblem: "*This project is co-financed by the European Union under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II)*".

Guidance on how to display the IPA funding reference can be found in the Programme Visual Identity Manual.

## 2.4 Disclaimer of liability

The European Union, the Managing Authority or any other Programme body is not responsible for the content of communication materials produced by the Lead Beneficiary and/or by any Final Beneficiary.

Therefore, according to the space available, and especially when content is not simple information, but takes a stand on themes relevant to the Programme or topical issues (e.g. studies, reports, publications, press kits, videos, websites, etc.) the following disclaimer must be included:

*"This [*document/publication/video/website…*] has been produced with the financial assistance of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The contents of this [*document/publication/video/website…*] are the sole responsibility of [*Final beneficiary's name*] and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme Authorities.*


## 2.5 Project websites

Project websites are hosted as subdomains in the Programme web portal (https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu), in order to harmonise contents and increase visibility and sustainability of results, which shall be kept in one platform far beyond project closure. *

The project website will contain the following pages:

- Home page
- News & events
- Multimedia
- Outputs
- Partners
- Data protection
- Contacts

There are no costs for the projects to create, host and maintain their websites on the Italy-Albania-Montenegro web portal, as this service is offered by the Programme. However, in case a project develops a product or activity, which needs specific online services or wider website space, an additional website or online platform may be developed, upon approval by the JS, for targeted branding purposes, as long as its sustainability is ensured.

These additional websites or platforms are neither required, nor necessary, unless they meet specific communication, marketing or service needs (e.g. tourist products /services, territorial marketing, etc.).

The Italy-Albania-Montenegro projects are given rights to implement with content their project website on the Programme web  portal; therefore, for project websites integrated into the programme web portal only costs for web content management, that is, for implementing the project website with contents have to be planned.

Project websites need to be updated on a regular basis with news, photographs, videos, etc. All outputs have to be published in the project website.

Detailed instructions for web content management are available in the section TOOLS / Project website guidelines of the web portal (https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/tools/project-website-guidelines).

Web Editors are invited to study the Web Editor's Handbook carefully and to watch the videotutorials with CMS training. In case of problems, they should seek the advice of qualified persons within their own organisation. A Support Service is available for technical issues.

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**WARNING!**

Please note that photographs published in the project website must always comply with copyright laws or be free licence. A few sites, such as https://www.pexels.com/ or https://pixabay.com/it/ offer images distributed under a Creative Commons CC0 License, which can be used/modified freely, are available for both commercial and non-commercial purposes and do not require author attribution.

Moreover, in compliance with the GDPR Regulation (UE) No. 2016/679, an explicit consent must be requested from event participants to use photographs making them recognisible *(see § 2.11)*.

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**\* EXCEPTION FOR SMALL SCALE PROJECTS**

Small Scale Projects will not be hosted as subdomains in the Programme web portal, but they will be provided with a static web page, presenting 'the project in a nutshell', its main activities and outputs, the partnership, and contacts.

Contents of the project web page will be published by the JS Communication Officer; therefore, projects are not required to appoint a Web Editor. However, they must inform the JS of ongoing activities, and send news about project events for publication in the Programme website.

In place of the project website, the creation of a project Facebook page is mandatory (*see § 2.13*)

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## 2.6 Project information on project partners' websites

Project partners must display on their organisation's website the following information about the project:

- The project logo (integrated into the Programme Logo);
- A short project description, including objectives, main activities and results;
- The financial support (amount and IPA funding reference);
- A link to the project website

## 2.7 Project poster

All approved projects must produce a poster (minimum size A3) displaying the project logo and giving information about the project. This poster must be displayed at the premises of each project partner, such as the entrance area of a building, so as to be readily visible to the public.

A template with the minimum requirements of the poster is available in the section "Visual Identity" of the Programme web portal. This template can be used as a basis for the poster, but projects are free to change the rest of the design.

It is recommended for projects to produce and put up the poster within 6 months after project approval.

## 2.8 Temporary billboards and permanent plaques/billboards

Infrastructure and construction sites financed by the Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme must be branded during and after the completion of works. This obligation applies to projects that fulfil the following criteria: the total public support to the operation exceeds EUR 500 000; the operation consists of the purchase of a physical object or of the financing of infrastructure or of construction operations.

While works are ongoing, the beneficiaries must put up a temporary billboard for each project consisting in the financing of infrastructure or construction works for which the total public support to the operation exceeds EUR 500 000. This temporary billboard must be replaced by a permanent plaque or billboard no later than 3 months after completion of the works.

The billboards and plaques must be of significant size and displayed at a location readily visible to the public. The name of the operation, its main objective, the Union emblem together with the reference to the Union and the reference to the IPA Fund shall take up at least 25 % of the temporary or permanent billboard/plaque.

A template with all the requirements is available in the section "Visual Identity" of the Programme web portal. Projects should only replace their name, specific objective and text according to their project.

## 2.9 Promotional materials

Promotional materials are branded items which are distributed to stakeholders to raise awareness on the project (e.g. pens), whereas communication products are either not distributed (e.g. roll-ups) or include content information on the project (e.g. brochures).

Promotional materials may be produced only if they are strictly necessary to project communication activities and if they clearly serve the objectives of the project communication strategy. Their cost and the quantity produced should be reasonable and justified. All promotional materials must be branded with the project logo. The following products may be produced if required by the projects' communication activities:

- Conference folders, Block-notes, Pens
- Low budget shoppers, USB sticks (containing project materials /outputs)

Items not included in this list may be eligible only if agreed with the Joint Secretariat. In order to avoid rejection during project monitoring, the project should contact the JS before purchasing such items, and ask for confirmation that the relevant costs can be accepted.

Communication products, as well as publications containing information on the project and its results are not considered as promotional material and are, thus, not subject to the above restrictions.

## 2.10    Project gifts

While promotional items are used to raise awareness on the project and can be produced in large quantities, project gifts are meant to improve relations with one specific person, while respecting applicable rules against corruption.

In compliance with art. 2 of ETC eligibility EC Delegated Act no. 481/2014, gifts are eligible up to a maximum EUR 50 item value, upon condition that they are used for communication activities. As it is for promotional items, they must be branded with the project logo.

## 2.11    Meetings and events *

Meetings and events are powerful PR tools, especially when they create engagement and interaction. Organizing a successful event implies: knowing the project thoroughly, identifying its target audience, devising the event concept, coordinating the technical aspects, and evaluating the outcomes. This requires creativity, passion, and expertise.

It is advisable to plan at least one public final event to present the results of the project.  Event planning has to be tailored to the projects' objectives and target groups. According to the objectives of the project, other targeted events may be organized so as to inform about activities, disseminate results and reinforce cooperation. Joint initiatives involving all partners and territories involved by the project will be particularly appreciated.

During the events, projects are encouraged to place the EU flag and the project poster or a project banner in a readily visible place, ensuring visibility of the EU and of the Programme. All conference and communication materials used for events must follow the rules outlined in the Programme Visual Identity Manual, provided by the Joint Secretariat.

* Specific guidelines for Small Projects in 4.1 - Annex 3 Guidance for Small Scale Projects

> **WARNING**
>
> In compliance with the GDPR Regulation (UE) No. 2016/679, Project Partners must request an explicit consent from participants to project events to use their data, photos or videos, which include personal image, for the purpose of evaluation, audit or promotion of the event outcomes, except for any commercial use, which is not allowed. If participants deny their consent to use personal data for audit/evaluation purposes or personal image for promotion/audit/evaluation purposes, the event organiser shall blur out a substantial part of personal data *(still allowing to verify the number of participants)* and personal image on photos and videos making him/her recognisable *(most probably, in this case pictures may be inappropriate for promotional purposes).*

## 2.12    PR and Media relations

Establishing relationships with media representatives and media outlets is an important part of the communication strategy, as is establishing relationships with influential individuals and institutions in the community and/or the population the project is trying to reach.

The best way to communicate project objectives and achievements to a targeted and/or a broader audience is to address the media. This can be done in many ways: from the writing and dissemination of press releases, to the arrangement of media interviews, the organization of press conferences, press tours, etc.

Projects are encouraged to produce a press kit, to be distributed at project events or press conferences; the kit should include a press release informing about the event, the project summary and other communication materials, when relevant. Press kits must include the project logo and the disclaimer of liability.

Monitoring and collecting articles, publications and radio/TV reports which mention or present your project (press review) is an excellent way to evaluate results and visibility. Google Alerts can be used for press and media monitoring. Obviously, this only applies to coverage that has been posted online.

## 2.13    Social media

Social Media is an inevitable part of communication in European projects. It is a powerful tool to disseminate information and to effectively let people know about the activities the projects are carrying out, creating networks among similar actors and generating virtual communities interested in specific topics.

Social media needs regular feeds which are time consuming. Projects are advised to develop a constant online presence and choose the channels which fit with their communication objectives and their target audiences. *

This medium has the advantage of being a two-way communication channel, and allows projects to get useful feedback from their target groups. The messages posted should therefore reflect the needs of the project and the timing of project delivery.

Here are some tips for effective social media management:

1) *Engage*: Engaged projects respond to their audiences through the various channels available online (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and more). Choose the ones that suit your needs best.

2) *Monitor*: Find the conversations that are happening online about your project theme by monitoring keywords. An easy way to get started is to set up Google Alerts.

3) *Create a Facebook fan page*: A fan page allows a project to share updates and encourage discussions with its online audience.  Setting up a fan page is free and easy, but it needs a content strategy.

4) *Tweet:*  Twitter offers the opportunity to create a real-time communication channel with your audience.  Link posting enhances tweets with content and directs attention to your website.

5) *Think SEO*: Search Engine Optimisation is important for building visibility for your project online. By improving your SEO presence, people will more easily find your project when using search engines.

Social media is in theory free of cost, but projects that aim to reach their target groups via these channels should foresee the necessary time and resources to feed their networks and build a strong online community. Please remember that all social media pages have to be customized with project logo, in line with visual identity guidelines.

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**WARNING**

Please note that pictures published on social media must comply with copyright laws or be free licence. They can be taken from sites such as https://www.pexels.com/ or https://pixabay.com/it/, which offer images distributed under a Creative Commons CC0 License.

Moreover, in compliance with the GDPR Regulation (UE) No. 2016/679, an explicit consent must be requested from event participants to use photographs making them recognisible *(see § 2.11)*.

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**\* EXCEPTION FOR SMALL SCALE PROJECTS**

The creation of a Facebook page is mandatory for Small Scale projects. The page will be customized with project logo; it may contain news, photos, videos, graphics, etc. and will keep track of all the activities carried out by Project Partners.

The number of page followers will be reported as result indicator in the Project Progress Report.

If the Lead Partner already has an institutional Facebook page, it is suggested to share the news from the project Facebook page, in order to increase visibility.

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## 3. VISUAL IDENTITY MANUAL

The Visual Identity Manual provides a set of instructions for branding project communication activities of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme, and extends the Brand Design Manual developed by Interact.

Instructions provided are not eligibility rules and should be adopted as guidelines for gaining a more effective Programme and Project communication. Any deviation from the guidelines must be agreed with the Joint Secretariat.

According to the Programme Communication Strategy, the Visual Identity Manual aims at:

- allowing an easy identification of the Programme and its funded projects at EU level and ensure that both Programme authorities and representatives of funded projects can prepare their information and communication materials in a strictly coherent way;

- ensuring high visibility and a harmonised visual identity of European Union Cohesion Policy projects.

The aim is to facilitate joint communication and information activities between the projects and the Programme, strengthening the sense of belonging together, ensuring consistent quality and making project communication easier, cheaper and effective.

The Visual Identity Manual is divided into two sections:

- "Section I - Programme visual identity: provides a combination of graphic solutions for the correct application of the provisions of EU regulations on communication for the Programme, the characteristics of the Programme logo identity, and the usage rules.

- "Section II - Project visual identity": describes the standards for the use of the project logo, specifying how different versions of the logo may be applied, coloured and displayed to ensure accuracy in all applications, taking into account an array of graphic components and showing their appropriate usage.

The Visual Identity Manual is available in the section "Visual Identity" of the Programme web portal (https://italy-albania-montenegro.eu/tools/visual-identity). A set of templates for project communication materials is available in the same section.

## 4. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Articles 111 (4b), Art. 115 to 117, and Annex XII of the EU Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013R1303) lay down information and communication rules within the programming period 2014–2020.

According to Art. 42 of the IPA CE Implementing Reg. No. 447/2014 of 2 May 2014 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0447), the communication rules laid down in CPR are applicable also for Interreg IPA CBC programmes.

The Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 821/2014 of 28 July 2014 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1501593556524&uri=CELEX:32014R0821) lays down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council. Technical characteristics of information and communication measures for operations are specified in Art. 3, 4 and 5.

The INTERACT website (http://www.interact-eu.net/) offers a series of tools, which are useful for drawing up the communication strategy and implementing communication activities.

In particular, see:

- Interact Communication Toolkit – v 3.0 / 29.11.2018

http://www.interact-eu.net/library?field_fields_of_expertise_tid=19#798-handbook-communication-toolkit-0

- Interact Handbook / Project Communication – 13.04.18

http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1780-handbook-project-communication

For publicity, communication & branding requirements and communication measures for operations also see:

- Programme Manual / CONTRACTING

3.1.1. Subsidy contract for it-al-mE beneficiaries - Art. 13 - Publicity, communication and branding

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/tools/programme-manual/contracting


- Programme Manual / IMPLEMENTATION

Factsheet 4.1 – Reporting procedure

https://italy-albania-montenegro.eu/tools/programme-manual/implementation


- Programme Manual / IMPLEMENTATION

Annexes 4.1 - Annex 3 – Guidance for Small Scale Projects

https://italy-albania-montenegro.eu/tools/programme-manual/implementation


- Programme Manual / IMPLEMENTATION

Factsheet 4.10 – Eligibility rules

https://italy-albania-montenegro.eu/tools/programme-manual/implementation


## COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania Montenegro Visual Identity Manual

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2018-10/181001_IT-AL-ME_Visual_Identity_Manual.pdf

- PA 1 – Project templates

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2018-10/PA1_project_templates_0.zip

- PA 2 – Project templates

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2018-10/PA2_project_templates_0.zip

- PA 3 – Project templates

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2018-10/PA3_project_templates_0.zip

- PA 4 – Project templates

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2018-10/PA4_project_templates_0.zip

- Project website Guidelines – Web Editor's Handbook + Videotutorials

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/tools/project-website-guidelines