



Evaluation of the Interreg Italy-Albania-Montenegro IPA CBC Programme 2014-2020



Interreg - IPA CBC
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



Thematic report on the results of the projects
financed under the first call

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I Acronyms

CP – Cooperation Programme

CPR – Common Provision Regulation

EQ – Evaluation Question

ETC – European Territorial Cooperation

EU – European Union

IPA – Instrument of Pre-Accession

JMC – Joint Monitoring Committee

JS – Joint Technical Secretariat

LP – Lead Partner

MA – Managing Authority

NIP – National Info Point

PA – Priority Axis

PP – Project Partner

SO – Specific Objective

TA – Technical Offer

2 Executive summary – Preliminary response to the evaluation questions

This executive summary provides preliminary responses to the evaluation questions. In line with the objectives of this report, the answers are based only on information related to the projects financed under the 1st call. The answers to the EQ will be updated during the next phases of the evaluation with the additional findings related to the other types of projects financed.

2.1 CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROGRAMME TO THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE COMPETITIVENESS OF SMES

EQ 38 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to the creation of networking actions involving business support organizations for supporting the internationalization of SMEs in the area?

Projects of the 1st call financed under SO I.I has contributed to create and consolidate cross border networks involving SMEs, business support organisations, research centres and other key actors. These networks primarily aim at increasing the technology transfer and the competitiveness of the SMEs in the national and international market. For example, **HISTEK** created an innovation community network that defines the common standards to be adopted in the education systems in order to train highly qualified young technicians. This network in addition to contributing to the formation of high-skilled employees, allowed cross-border SMEs to develop real and sustainable competitiveness and facilitate the technicians mobility at cross-border level, improving in this way, SMEs internationalization capacity.

EQ 39 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to create actions for improving access to research results and technology transfer for SMEs?

Networks created under SO I.I are primarily aimed at increasing technology transfer to SMEs. An example is offered by **FILA** that addressed the lack of innovation characterising the agri-food sector. Basically, the project encouraged the interactions between research and SMEs through the realisation of cross border “Fertilization and Innovation Labs in Agri-food”.

EQ 40 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to promoting innovative start-ups, clusters and networks?

As underlined in chapter 5.I the creation of cross border networks is one of the most common type of outputs of the projects financed under the 1st call. In particular, under SO I.I, the programme has contributed to create and/or consolidate several networks involving key actors, such as policy makers in charge of innovation policies, business support organisations, research centres and SMEs. In some cases, project activities also led to the establishment of new clusters focused on specific topics. This is the case of **HISTEK** that created an innovation community network focused on the education system of the area.

EQ 41. To what extent has the Programme helped to promote the development of innovative approaches and funding tools to strengthen skills and encourage entrepreneurship for innovation, including social innovation (such as social inclusion, business angel networks, crowdfunding, open-innovation, and start-up lab, ...), and the improvement of the health system (development of new services, e-health)?

Projects financed under call I contributed in a limited way to the improvement of the quality of the innovation policies of the area. For example, with regards to the financing tools, the Programme contributed to transfer to Albania and Montenegro new approaches for supporting SMEs through financial instruments (see project

3C4SME). Regarding social innovation and more specifically the health sector instead, under SO 1.1 the project **PHASE**, developed innovative solutions in the field of eHealth and contributed to increase the quality (both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness) of the specific healthcare services. However, the gap analysis performed by the Programme in 2018, taking into account the objectives/results expected from the CP and considering the topics addressed by the financed projects, indicated social innovation/inclusion as a topic to be tackled in the subsequent calls (i.e. small scale projects specifically focus on social innovation).

In general, according to the data collected from project partners¹, including also interviews with target groups, within the project evaluation surveys launched by the JS, projects under SO 1.1 directly and indirectly contribute to the enhancement of the framework conditions for the development of SME's cross-border market.

2.2 CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROGRAMME TO PROMOTING GREATER ATTRACTIVENESS OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS AND TO IMPROVE SMART AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EQ 43 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to the development of common models and plans for the management of smart and sustainable tourism, stimulating the skills of public operators and civil society stakeholders, also favouring a bottom-up approach?

Most of projects funded under SO 2.1 developed common models and plans for the management of smart and sustainable tourism. For instance, **Co.Co.Tour** developed a cross border eco-museum model and a common strategy, focused on community tourism; **NEST** developed a Smart Tourism Destination Action Plan; **REGLPORTS** developed a Cross border nautical tourism plan; **wISHfUI** developed a common action plan for the smart management of tourist destinations to be adopted by the public authorities of the Programme area. These outputs show the capacity of the programme to mobilise local actors (also through bottom-up approaches) in developing new models and approaches for the innovation of the tourism offer of the area. However, despite the relevant number of activities and outputs related to the management of smart and sustainable tourism, the impact on the projects did not bring to an integration or harmonisation of the tourism policies in the cross-border area.

EQ 44 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to the development of distinct and diversified tourism products and to the definition of new services targeting specific target groups (e.g., disabled, young and old, etc.) and sectors (food and wine, sports, religious tourism, etc.) including through small-scale investments and demonstration projects?

Some of the projects financed under SO 2.1 aimed at improving the quality of the tourism offer of the area, by targeting specific types of target groups and sectors. Concerning target groups, **wISHfUI** led to the adoption (by the project partners) of a common action plan for the smart management of tourist destinations which provides for specific actions to increase the accessibility for tourists with diseases and special needs to cultural and natural programme areas. **Co.Co.Tour** developed a cross border eco-museum model also targeting specific types of groups (young, foreigners, and disabled in particular). On the other hand, with regards to specific sectors, the food and wine one is considered one of the key diversifying sector thanks to the approaches developed by **NEST** and **Co.Co.Tour**. In this regard, it is worth noting that the gap analysis performed by the Programme in 2018 indicated the following missing topics for the targeted call: Promote

¹ Survey data have been provided by the JTS and refers to mid-June 2021.

tourism offer and services for families, Tourism offer and services linked to sport/adventure, Promote tourism offer and services for youngsters

EQ 45 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to promote actions having an impact on the protection and quality of the environment, on the enhancement of lesser-known destinations, protected areas (parks, Natura 2000 sites) and cultural heritage of the area?

The promotion of sustainable approaches in the tourism sector is the key objective of most of the projects financed under SO 2.1. By way of example, **3D-IMP-ACT** developed specific technological solutions (e.g. Virtual Reality Platform) for the natural and cultural heritage of the area including lesser-known destinations.

EQ 46 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to the creation of cross-border cooperation platforms (cooperation platforms for creativity in the southern Adriatic) and networks of cultural and creative industries, also promoting public-private partnership?

Projects financed under SO 2.2 supported the creation of networks among the stakeholders of the cultural and creative sectors. For instance, **ADNICH** created a South Adriatic network between Italy, Albania and Montenegro aimed at developing joint artistic productions; **CIRCE** consolidated a network of public sector institutions whose primary role is the development of local and regional policies to foster the development of cultural and audio-visual sector.

EQ 47 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to new creative productions and to enhance the cultural heritage of the area?

Projects financed through the 1st call under SO 2.1 contributed to new creative productions. An example comes from **ADNICH**, that despite limitations to travel due to COVID-19, led to the creation of new theatre productions and to the organization of a cross-border festival (organized through a YouTube Channel). However, the gap analysis indicated “Arts other than visual arts (music, literature etc.)” as a missing topic for the targeted call.

In general, according to the data collected from project partners, including also interviews with target groups, within the project evaluation surveys launched by the JS, projects under SO 2.1 directly and indirectly contribute to the development of plans for smart management of tourist destinations to be adopted by public authorities. Only a small portion of projects declares having a great potential for future development of plans.

As regards SO 2.2, a third of the respondents of the above-mentioned survey declared their project has already set up cross-border networks in the cultural and creative fields, while another 30% declared their project made it possible to set up cross-border networks². Furthermore, more than a half of projects declared to have set up cross-border agreements in the cultural and creative fields.

² Survey data have been provided by the JTS and refers to mid-June 2021.

2.3 CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CROSS-BORDER GOVERNANCE FOR POLICIES TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND PROMOTE THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES, RESOURCE EFFICIENCY, RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES AND THE TRANSITION TO A SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

EQ 49 - Have the conditions been created for a lasting cooperation between institutional actors and private actors in the prevention and management of risks deriving from climate change?

Projects financed under PA 3, and more specifically under SO 3.1 led to the creation and consolidation of cross border networks in the field of risks prevention and risks management.

EQ 50 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to strengthening technical and scientific capacities, to create cross-border platforms and innovative solutions for research, observation and monitoring, and to the development of common knowledge and data gathering tools in support of integrated environmental and landscape planning activities, according to European directives?

Looking to the projects of the 1st call financed under SO 3.1 we can observe several activities aimed providing innovative solutions for research, observation and monitoring. For example, **WELCOME** not only carried out research on marine litter but also created a valid background for future research and monitoring activities, especially in the two IPA countries. In fact, thanks to the project, the University of Montenegro carried out specific monitoring activities that contributed to harmonise the monitoring approaches of Montenegro to the EU standards provided for the EU Marine Framework Directory.

EQ 51 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to the development of joint plans for the management of cross-border habitats and ecosystems?

The projects analysed through the web-survey and the case studies offer examples of activities contributing to the development of joint plans for the management of cross-border habitats and ecosystems. For instance, **LASPEH** contributed to develop a transnational strategy aimed at preserving common species and habitats, in particular it is meant for the species protected by EU Directives 92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC and/or threatened by environmental variations caused by climate changes and wrong management.

EQ 52 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to the implementation of measures to raise awareness among farmers on the negative effects of excessive use of chemicals on the water cycle and on the promotion of environmentally friendly farming practices?

At this stage of the evaluation exercise, few are the evidence about these types of impacts. However, as confirmed during the case study analysis, **FILA** project, under SO 1.1, through the creation of innovative clusters and networks between research and business actors of the agro-food system, involved farmers and agri-food entrepreneurs in transferring innovative practices for environmental protection.

EQ 53 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to the cross-border exchange of regional / national good practices in the field of renewable energy sources with the aim of developing common models for energy planning, increasing endogenous renewable energy potentials and achieving energy efficiency goals?

As underlined in chapter 5.1 the creation of cross border networks is one of the most common type of outputs of the projects financed under the first call. Under SO 3.2, these networks mainly serve the exchange of practices in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. For example, **REEHUB** created a network of Hubs located in public buildings in each region involved. The Hub is meant to serve as a reference

point, allowing the sharing of experiences among countries with similar backgrounds (Mediterranean) as an “agora” where local policy makers can have open dialogues with building material industries, designers and green SMEs for the implementation of local energy plans.

EQ 54 - Have public administrations identified and adopted European standards and created a sustainable energy mindset at local community level?

Exchanges of practices between EU public authorities and local authorities from IPA countries are among the key activities financed under SO 3.2. In this sense, the Programme is paving the way for increasing the adoption of EU standards in IPA contexts. By way of example, **REEHUB** contributed to the adoption of new policies addressing the nZEB directive³ in Albania and Montenegro. However, the adoption of EU standards in the RES and REU sector for public administration is one of the missing topic identified by the Programme gap analysis, addressed by the targeted call for proposal.

EQ 55 - Have the actors developed local action plans for sustainable energy (also by promoting citizen/stakeholder participation)?

REEHUB led to the adoption of seven energy efficiency actions plans that were developed and discussed with the involvement of local communities.

EQ 56 - Have the actors conducted feasibility studies, identified financial opportunities and implemented pilot initiatives to achieve the energy efficiency objectives in public buildings (or other initiatives)?

REEHUB partners are planning for future activities also including investments for improving energy efficiency of public buildings.

From a general perspective, according to the data collected from project partners⁴, including also interviews with target groups, within the project evaluation surveys launched by the JS, more than a half of projects under SO 3.1 directly and indirectly contribute to the set up common plans enhancing and safeguarding water landscapes. As regards SO 2.2, a third of the respondents declared their project set up common plans for energy efficiency and sustainable energy production.

2.4 CONTRIBUTION TO INCREASE CROSS-BORDER ACCESSIBILITY, PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SERVICES AND IMPROVE PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

EQ 58 - Have the funded interventions contributed to improving the accessibility of the area?

Projects of call I financed under SO 4.1 offers examples of outputs and results showing a contribution to the improvement of the accessibility of the area. The case study on the project **SAGOV** highlights the contribution of the project to the improvement of interoperability and connectivity in the field of maritime transport. However, according to the results of the gap analysis, the programme should further tackle the topic of accessibility and a specific focus to this topic has been dedicated in the targeted call for proposal.

³ Nearly zero-energy buildings Directive 2010/31/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, aims at promoting the use of energy from renewable sources in buildings, in order to lower their consumption and the amount of energy produced. This will increase the level of energy performance of both public and private buildings.

⁴ Survey data have been provided by the JTS and refers to mid-June 2021.

EQ 59 - Has multimodal transport been improved?

Projects of call I financed under SO 4.1 offers some examples of outputs and results showing a contribution to the improvement of the multimodal transport. The project **PORTS**, for instance, developed a multimodal transport network chart that shows possible connections for the different modes of transport between origins and destinations. Despite this example, it is worth mentioning that 1st call projects only partially addressed the topic of multimodal connection and this is confirmed also by the outcomes of the gap analysis.

EQ 60 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to improving the cross-border network of customs stakeholders to improve customs procedures for passenger and freight traffic?

At this stage of the evaluation exercise there are no evidence about these types of impacts. Indeed, as confirmed by the gap analysis performed by the Programme in 2018, 1st call projects did not sufficiently tackle the topic of custom procedures. As a result, a targeted call for proposal has been launched by the Programme.

EQ 61 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to fostering links between the main cross-border transport infrastructures and the trans-European corridors of the EU, aimed at promoting sustainable transport in the region, also by making small-scale investments in advanced services and physical infrastructure?

The project **SAGOV** offers a clear example on how the Programme is fostering the links with the trans-European corridors. During the conference that marked the end of the project activities (*Adriatic Connectivity Forum*, 18th of February 2021), representatives of both Italian and IPA public institutions discussed about possible opportunities in the South Adriatic Area that may arise from the Connectivity Agenda, in order to increase trade competitiveness and maritime safety not only in the specific Programme area, but also in the East - West route, that goes from the Black Sea to the Italian Adriatic regions (the so-called Corridor VIII). However, the gap analysis outcomes suggested to further developed the cross-border transport infrastructures topic through the targeted call for proposal.

EQ 62 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to improving the intra-regional connectivity of the area as a hub for both freight and passengers to and from other destinations?

The project **PORTS** offers an example of how the Programme is contributing to the improvement of the intra-regional connectivity. Indeed, the project develops new sustainable solutions for maritime transport and sustainable mobility networks in order to strengthen and improve internal links of tourist transport and pleasure cruises. Integrated transport (passenger and freight) are also strengthened across Ionian and Adriatic Seas, in order to boost sustainable development and full inclusion of areas characterized by complex accessibility. However, the gap analysis outcomes suggested to further developed the topic through the targeted call for proposal.

EQ 63 - To what extent has the Programme contributed to the improvement and to the exchange of skills in terms of sustainable transport systems for both operators and those in responsible for the management?

The project **PORTS** implemented online capacity building workshops for strategic management of ports, addressed to operators and those responsible for ports management. However, the gap analysis outcomes suggested to further developed the topic through the targeted call for proposal.

According to the data collected from project partners⁵, including also interviews with target groups, within the project evaluation surveys launched by the JS, almost all projects under SO 4.1 directly and indirectly

⁵ Survey data have been provided by the JTS and refers to mid-June 2021.

contribute to the set-up of agreements for cross-border passengers and freight sustainable transport systems and multimodal mobility solutions.

3 Introduction

The Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme involves two Italian regions (Puglia and Molise) and all the territories of two countries affected by the pre-accession process (Albania and Montenegro). Programme budget for 2014-2020 is 92.7 million euros.

Figure 1 -IPA II Program - CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro - Cooperation area



In January 2021, t33 has been commissioned by ARTI, *Agenzia Regionale per la Tecnologia e l'Innovazione* of Puglia Region, to perform the ongoing evaluation of the Programme. In coherence with what proposed in the Technical Offer, this report provides a preliminary analysis of the **results of the projects financed under the first call of the Interreg Italy-Albania-Montenegro**.

This first report on the results of the 1st call projects lays the foundation for the development of the thematic report about the impacts of the Programme, that will be delivered in November 2021.

The preliminary evaluation of the results of the 1st call projects is divided into the following sections:

- 1) Analysis of the progress in the implementation of the call;
- 2) Analysis of the impacts;
- 3) Annexes which present the case studies' reports.

Different tools have been used by the evaluators to answer the relevant evaluation questions (desk analysis, interviews with programme authorities, web-survey, case studies with selected projects, etc.). The following chapter provides full details on the methodology used by the evaluators.

4 Methodological approach

The main objective of this evaluation is to assess the results of the projects financed under the first call of the Interreg Italy-Albania-Montenegro. The table below summarizes the elements evaluated in this report.

Table 1 - Elements evaluated

Elements evaluated	Sub-elements
Analysis of the progress in the implementation of the call	Available resources
	Types of beneficiaries
	Financial progress
	Output indicators
	Result indicators
Analysis of impacts	Project outputs
	“Direct results”
	Cross-border added value
	Contribution to EUSAIR

The evaluation of the elements presented above stems from the analysis of both primary and secondary data. The analysis of Programme documents as well as of the administrative data retrieved from the Programme monitoring and reporting system (December 2020) represented the key starting point for the evaluation. Additionally, the analysis has been fine-tuned thanks to the information collected through interviews with programme bodies, case studies and web surveys. Indeed, between March and April, a total of 14 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the MA, JS, JMC members, NIPs and FLCs covering all partner states.

Furthermore, between April and May 2021, the evaluators realized 9 case studies (for a total number of 17 interviews with project lead partners and project partners). Case studies have been selected in agreement with the JS and referred to more advanced projects approved during the first call for proposal. Project selection has been done with the aim of guaranteeing a well-balanced coverage among programme specific objectives and countries.

In addition, web surveys were carried out involving all Programme beneficiaries, to collect information of the progresses made by the projects in terms of outputs and results, their cross-border added value and the contribution to EUSAIR. It is worth noting that, for the purpose of the present report, only the answers provided by lead and project partners of the 1st call projects have been considered.

Lastly, the evaluators also analysed the data collected from project partners, including also interviews with target groups within the project evaluation surveys launched by the JS. Data have been provided by the JS and refers to mid-June 2021.

The table below provides an overview of the methodological tools and data sources.

Table 2 - Data sources

<p>Desk analysis</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme documents • Programme web site and projects portals • Application forms and progress reports • Available literature on policy and programme • Data from project evaluation survey launched by the JS <p>Available databases (e.g. <i>cohesiondata</i>)</p> <p>Data retrieved from the monitoring and reporting system</p>
<p>Interviews</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme bodies involved: MA/CA, JS, MC, NIPs, FLCs, EC Rapporteur • 14 interviews have been conducted to ensure full coverage of programme structures and participating countries (between March and April 2021) • 9 case study report, for a total of 17 interviews with project Lead partner and Project partner.
<p>Web surveys</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web survey addressed to Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme beneficiaries

The detailed list of the Programme authorities interviewed is presented in the annex to the “First report on Programme efficiency and effectiveness”.

Case studies reports are available in the Annexes.

5 Analysis of the progress in the implementation of the call

5.1 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The first call for standard projects was launched the 16th of March 2017. The call covered all SOs (i.e., 4 Priority Axes and 6 Specific Objectives) with a total amount of 25 MEUR initially allocated (of which 21,25 MEUR EU contribution). Key rules for standard projects:

- At least one partner from eligible territories of Italy, one partner from Albania and one partner from Montenegro
- Total n. of partners must not exceed six including LP.
- Minimum total budget (incl. national co-financing) of MEUR 0,5; maximum total budget (incl. national co-financing) of MEUR 1,5 except MEUR 2 for PA 4.
- The minimum budget for each partner cannot be lower than 10% of the total budget of the project.
- The project implementation shall not be longer than 24 months.

190 projects proposals were submitted, 145 of which were considered eligible from the administrative perspective. JMC responded to the relevant number of eligible applications by increasing to MEUR 30,5 the total amount of budget allocated to the call.

In total 32 project were approved. The table below illustrates the distribution of the number of projects approved and of the total budget allocated across the SOs.

Table 3 1st call: number of projects approved and total budget allocated

OS	N. projects	Budget MEUR
1.1 - Enhance the framework conditions for the development of SMEs cross border market	7	7,0
2.1 - Boost attractiveness of natural and cultural assets to improve a smart and sustainable economic development	9	8,7
2.2 - Increase the cooperation of the key actors of the area for the delivery of innovative cultural and creative products	5	4,3
3.1 - Increase cross border cooperation strategies on water landscapes	6	5,4
3.2 - Promote innovative practices and tools to reduce carbon emission and to improve energy efficiency	1	0,7
4.1 - Increase coordination among relevant stakeholders to promote sustainable cross border connections in the cooperation area	4	4,0
Tot	32	30,3

Source: DB list of operations approved + eMs

5.2 TYPES OF BENEFICIARIES

The 32 projects approved involve 178 partners (including the 32 LP). As illustrated by the table below, more than 40% of beneficiaries come from Italy. Partners from Albania and Montenegro represent respectively the

33% and 26% of the total. Looking to lead partners, beneficiaries from Italy leads almost half of projects, while in case of Albania and Montenegro, the percentage of LP is respectively 38% and 16%.

For what concerns the distribution of the allocated budget across the countries, also in this case Italy leads with 46% of the budget allocated to Italian beneficiaries, followed by Albania (30%) and Montenegro (24%).

Table 4 Distribution of partners, LP and budget across countries

Country	N. partners	N. LP	Budget MEUR
ALB	58	12	9,1
ITA	73	15	13,9
MNE	47	5	7,3
Tot	178	32	30,3

Source: DB list of operations approved + eMs

The two maps below illustrate the geographical distribution of the partners and lead partners across the cooperation area. As the maps show, beneficiaries are concentrated in the main cities (Bari, Lecce, Podgorica and Tirana).

Map 4 Geographical distribution of partners (left panel) and lead partners (right panel)



Source: DB list of operations approved + eMs

Looking at the types of beneficiaries, the analysis of the data reveals a prevalence of public partners: in total public authorities indeed represent the 52% of the partners and the 54% of the budget allocated under the 1st call (see grey rows in the table below).

Most of them are local public authorities (24 from Italy, 15 from Montenegro, 12 from Albania), followed by national authorities (such as ministries) that are strongly involved in Albania and Montenegro (respectively 17 and 11 partners).

The analysis of the type of beneficiaries also shows an interesting aspect. According to data provided in the table below, extracted from eMS, it seems that there is a strong involvement of interest groups/NGOs/no profit organisations that represent 17% of the total partners (13 from Albania, 9 from Montenegro, 8 from Italy) and a 15% of the total budget allocated. This aspect needs to be further analysed since the category “interest groups/NGOs/no profit organisations” includes not only associations and NGOs but also social partners (such as chambers of commerce, associations of industry, etc.). A deeper analysis shows that the weight, including the financial one, of NGOs/associations is certainly less relevant than what reported in the eMS (and this aspect is also confirmed by the Programme gap analysis). Accordingly, the targeted call, and in particular the Small Scale Projects, seems to have reached the objective of balancing the type of partners involved.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that few projects (SAGOV, INERRANT and 3C4SME) have an interest groups/NGOs/no profit organisation as LP, in particular associations of enterprises and SMEs.

An important role was also played by the universities/research centres that represent the 12% of the partners (11 from Italy, 7 from Albania, 4 from Montenegro).

Table 5 Type of partners: number and budget

Type	N. partners	Budget MEUR
national public authority	28	4,8
local public authority	51	8,8
regional public authority	13	2,7
infrastructure and (public) service provider	1	0,2
education/training centre and school	2	0,3
higher education/research centre/university	22	4,0
business support organisation	7	1,3
International organisation, EEIG under national law	2	0,2
sectoral agency	5	0,6
interest groups including NGOs/no profit organization	30	4.4
other	16	3,0

Source: DB list of operations approved + eMs

It is interesting to remark that, according to the information provided by the JS, there is a 41% recurrence of the same partners, i.e. like in other Interreg programmes there is a certain Interreg specialisation, especially in Montenegro and in Italy.

5.3 FINANCIAL PROGRESS

Projects approved under the 1st call started between March and May 2018. They were all consequently supposed to end during the first semester of 2020. However, the impact of COVID 19 and the problems related to delays in the certification flow led to extending the deadlines for the project closure. All 32 projects benefitted from an extension of the deadlines. According to information provided by the JS⁶, 23 projects are now closed while the remaining 9 will close by the end of June 2021.

With regards to the absorption of the available budget, the table below is based on data from eMS which compare the available budget to the expenditure declared to the FLC before the end of 2020. As the table shows, projects of the 1st call have declared to FLC approximately half of the available budget. If we consider that (1) the amount of expenditures approved can be lower than what declared to the FLC, and that (2) 12 projects closed at the end of 2020, we see a high risk of underspending (i.e., the total amount of budget spent by the project will probably be lower than expected). However, it is worth mentioning that according to the information provided by the JS, projects that have closed their activities showed a very good performance level, being able to spend almost the totality of their available budget.

Table 6 Financial progress

SO	Budget MEUR	Declared to FLC	%
1.1	7,0	3,6	51%
2.1	8,7	4,3	49%
2.2	4,3	2,1	48%

⁶ See specific excel file provided by JTS in April

SO	Budget MEUR	Declared to FLC	%
3.1	5,4	3,8	70%
3.2	0,7	0,6	86%
4.1	4,0	1,8	45%
Total	30,3	16,2	53%

Source: eMS (December 2020)

If we focus on the types of beneficiaries which are supposed to absorb the majority of the funds allocated (i.e., public authorities, interest groups/NGOs/no profit organisations, universities/research centres) we can observe that public authorities represent the category of beneficiaries most significantly affected by delays in the certification flow. In case of Albania, public authorities have declared to FLC (only) MEUR 1,9 out of total of MEUR 4,8 (i.e., 39%). The situation of the public authorities is also critical in Italy, in particular for Regions that have declared to beneficiaries only MEUR 0,6 out of a total allocation of MEUR 2.2. On the other hand, Montenegrin public partners appears to be more effective in the management of their financial flows.

Table 7 Financial progress per type of beneficiaries

Type of Partner	ALB	ITA	MNE
national public authority	38%	-	57%
local public authority	42%	51%	68%
regional public authority	39%	25%	96%
higher education/research centre/university	58%	78%	79%
interest groups including NGOs/no profit organization	52%	74%	36%
Total	53%		

Source: DB list of operations approved + eMs

5.4 CONTRIBUTION TO OUTPUT AND RESULT INDICATORS

As illustrated by the tables below, outputs and results achieved by the Programme by the end of 2020 totally depend on what has been achieved by the projects financed under the first call.

Table 8 – 1st call projects output achievements 2020 and expected 2023

PA	ID	Name	CP target 2023	2020	2020	2023	2023
				Achieved	Achieved 1 st call projects	Expected	Expected 1 st call projects
1	1.1.2	Number of business and research institutions involved/offering non-financial support	11	10	10	91	60
	CO04	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	11	68	68	348	176
2	2.1.1	Number of new products, services and pilot or demonstration projects realized	4	6	6	76	64
	2.1.2	Number of valorized sites	4	6	6	34	28

	2.2.2	Number of cross-border creative platforms created	4	5	5	18	14
	CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	4	0	0	66	21
3	3.1	Number of new products and services, pilot and demonstration projects realized	15	21	21	139	115
	3.1.2	Number of users involved (in pilot or demonstration projects).	15	73	73	244	235
4	4.1.1	Number of new products, services, pilot and demonstration projects realized	4	2	2	36	29
	4.1.2	Number of new multimodal connections for the benefit of passengers and freight	4	0	0	15006*	15000*

* These values should be considered carefully since the project ON CLOUD NINE has recently done a major change and these data should be updated accordingly.

Source: own elaboration based on AIR 2020 and on data provided by the JS

Table 9 – 1st call projects results achievements 2020

PA/OS	Type	Name	PF Baseline	Target 2023	2020 Achieved	Achieved 1 st call projects
1/1.1	Result	Common interventions aimed to improve the cross border framework	8	15	2	2
2/2.1	Result	Common action Plans for the smart management of tourist destinations to be adopted by the public authorities of the Programme area	0	4	3	3
2/2.2	Result	Cross-border networks in the cultural and creative fields	2	2	2	2
2/2.2	Result	Cross-border agreements in the cultural and creative fields	1	3	1	1
3/3.1	Result	Common plans enhancing and safeguarding water landscapes (including marine ones)	3	7	2	2
3/3.2	Result	Common plans for energy efficiency and sustainable energy production	1	4	0	0
4/4.1	Result	Agreements for cross-border passengers and freight sustainable transport systems and multimodal mobility solutions	5	7	1	1

Source: own elaboration based on AIR 2020 and on data provided by the JS

6 Analysis of impacts

This chapter is based on the information collected through the survey and the case studies. Section 5.1 presents the types of outputs realised by the projects, section 5.2 illustrates the types of “direct results”, while the last three sections (i.e., 5.3, 5.4, 5.5) provide insights on the cross added value, the contribution to horizontal principles and the contribution to EUSAIR.

6.1 PROJECTS OUTPUTS

Data collected from case studies and web survey confirm one of the key characteristics of ETC interventions: most of projects’ outputs are “intangibles”, meaning that they usually refer to elements such as the set-up of cross border networks, the carry out of awareness-raising activities and/or the elaboration/implementation of policy instruments.

The table below is based on the survey and it shows, for each SO, the percentage of respondents considering the specific type of output relevant to their project. As the table shows, “intangible” outputs can be found across the different SOs. Beside the “intangibles” it is also interesting to notice that under many SOs, projects have tested new tools and solutions.

Table 10 Types of outputs per SO

Types of outputs	TOT	OS 1.1	OS 2.1	OS 2.2	OS 3.1	OS 3.2	OS 4.1
Set up of cross border networks	55%	75%	33%	100%	25%	67%	100%
Elaboration and implementation of joint strategies, actions plan, protocols	48%	0%	83%	0%	88%	0%	100%
Implementation of joint monitoring activities	14%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%
Joint studies/research	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	0%
Awareness-raising and capacity building activities	55%	38%	33%	50%	75%	100%	50%
Test of new tools and solutions	52%	38%	33%	50%	75%	67%	50%
Small scale infrastructural interventions	7%	0%	17%	0%	13%	0%	0%

Source: web survey

The following sub-sections provide additional information on the main types of projects outputs by providing concrete examples from various SOs.

As the table above shows, most of the projects analysed are carrying out activities aimed at **setting up and consolidate cross border networks**. For instance:

- Under SO 1.1, **FILA** created innovative clusters and networks between research and business actors. One of the key outputs of the project was the creation of cross-border “Fertilization and innovation labs in Agro-food” in three different cities of the area (Bari, Korce e Nikšić). **HISTEK** created a networked innovation community able to improve, with a co-responsible approach, the creation of

common standards to be adopted in the education systems supporting the training of highly qualified young technicians. This allows to favour the real and sustainable competitiveness of cross-border SMEs and for allowing the mobility of technicians at cross-border level as key factor for improving SMEs capacity of internationalization. **INNOTOURCLUST** created an innovative cross border tourist cluster, focused on the integration and training of local economic operators.

- Under SO 2.1, **3D-IMP-ACT** set up an interregional network of historic sites and develop innovative fruition and enhancement models and products.
- Under SO 2.2, **ADNICH** created of a South Adriatic network between Italy, Albania and Montenegro aimed at developing joint artistic productions. **CIRCE** consolidated a network of public sector institutions whose primary role is the development of local and regional policies to foster the development of cultural and audiovisual sector.
- Under SO 3.1, **LASPEH** created a network of organizations cooperating for nature conservation and improvement of Natura 2000 sites.
- Under SO 3.2, **REEHUB** set up a network of hubs working for increasing energy efficiency in public buildings. More precisely, the project created a network of Hubs located in public buildings in each region involved. The Hub is meant to serve as a reference point, allowing the sharing of experiences among countries with similar backgrounds (Mediterranean) as an “agora” where local policy makers can have open dialogues with building material industries, designers and green SMEs for the implementation of local energy plans.
- Under SO 4.1, **SAGOV** set up a network of policy makers from all three countries that lead to the definition of a Memorandum of Understanding – namely a binding agreement according to which the three countries strengthen their cooperation to define efficient policies in the field of Connectivity Agenda.

Almost half of the projects analysed are contributing to the **elaboration and implementation of joint strategies, action plans, protocols**. For instance:

- Under SO 2.1, **Co.Co.Tour** developed a cross-border eco-museum model and a common strategy, focused on community tourism. **NEST** developed a Smart Tourism Destination Action Plan; **REGLPORTS** developed a Cross border nautical tourism plan; **wISHfUI** developed a common action plan for the smart management of tourist destinations to be adopted by the public authorities of the Programme area. This action plan provides for specific actions to increase the accessibility for tourists with particular diseases and special needs to cultural and natural programme areas.
- Under SO 3.1, **ADRINET** developed an environmental risk management plan; **BLUE LAND** developed a common model for participatory management and monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystem services in selected marine coastal areas; **LASPEH** defined a common strategy to preserve the natural heritage and the landscape in the low Adriatic area; **WELCOME** defined a cross border marine litter management plan.
- Under SO 4.1, **ON CLOUD NINE** defined a territorial strategy for the air transport system; **SAGOV** led to a trilateral memorandum of understanding/agreement for maritime coordination in the south-Adriatic area.

Most of the projects analysed are carrying out **awareness-raising and capacity building activities**. For instance:

- Under SO 1.1, **BRE** organised training and mentoring courses for social partners. **HISTEK** promoted the development of a new transnational tertiary education level course (theoretical and practical

activities) focused on the acquisition of job-specific competencies, transversal skills and critical knowledge co-designed by SMEs and Educational institutions. The “Fertilization and Innovation Labs in Agri-food” organised by the project **FILA** were aimed at encouraging the transfer of innovations to the SMEs of the agro-food sector.

- Under SO 2.1, **NEST** organised a virtual joint experiential laboratory for smart tourism.
- Under SO 2.2, **CIRCE** developed a new web platform for the promotion of Montenegro as a film destination.
- Under SO 3.1, **3 WATCH OUT** organised capacity building/training schemes such a webinar for institutions and volunteer and an exercise on seismic risk in south Italy region of Apulia. **ADRINET** organised capacity building activities for fishermen. **FLAT** organised capacity building for Albanian and Montenegrin rescue services.
- Under SO 3.2, **REEHUB** organised roadshows for stakeholders.
- Under SO 4.1, **ON CLOUD NINE** organised exchange of practices in the field of sustainable transports.

Most of the projects analysed are **testing new tools, products and solutions**. For instance:

- Under SO 1.1, **3C4SME** has introduced new financial tools to facilitate the access to credit. **PHASE** developed three eHealth systems: Infarct.NET for heart attack support, a platform for Integrated Care Pathways in Neurodegenerative diseases and PPlatform for remote monitoring of chronic patients.
- Under SO 2.1, **Co.Co.Tour** developed ICT Tools for smart usability of the heritage. **3D-IMP-ACT** developed virtual/augmented reality models and 3D artefacts/environments of historic sites.
- Under SO 2.2, **ADNICH** developed new cultural events/products (see e.g., the events related to the cycles of artistic residences promoted in the three countries).
- Under SO 3.1, **ADRINET** carried out specific pilot actions for testing solutions such as the test of fishing equipment endow with RFID micro-chips. **LASPEH** carried out specific pilot actions focused on selected habitat/species. **WELCOME** tested new approaches for restoring dunes.
- Under SO 4.1, **SAGOV** developed and tested a specific transport connectivity e-platform with semaphore System.

6.2 “DIRECT RESULTS”

For what concerns “benefits” brought to the territories by the projects activities and outputs, data collected from case studies and web survey show that the “direct results” produced by the programme can be traced back to some macro typologies (see table below).

Table 11 Types of “direct results” per SO

Types of results	TOT	SO 1.1	SO 2.1	SO 2.2	SO 3.1	SO 3.2	SO 4.1
Increased skills and competences of key actors	62%	100%	50%	100%	25%	67%	50%
Increased awareness and more engagement of local actors	34%	0%	17%	0%	63%	100%	50%
Better governance	34%	0%	0%	0%	75%	67%	100%
Increased attractiveness of the cooperation area	17%	0%	83%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Types of results	TOT	SO 1.1	SO 2.1	SO 2.2	SO 3.1	SO 3.2	SO 4.1
More efficient/effective delivery of public services	28%	13%	0%	0%	75%	0%	50%

Source: web survey

As the table above shows, all SOs **contribute to increase the skills and the competences of the key actors.**

Impacts concern the improvement of competencies of public actors and of others involved in the definition and implementation of public policies. For example, under SO 1.1 and SO 2.2:

- **3C4SME**, improved the competencies, in particular of stakeholders from Albania and Montenegro, in the definition and implementation of financial instruments for supporting SMEs.
- **BRE** empowered partners' knowledge on the business registers through several activities centred on training and mentoring.
- **CIRCE** paved the way to apply the Italian tax incentives policy for cultural and creative industries also in Albania and Montenegro, according to their legislation, to allow enterprises working in audiovisual sector to benefit from incentives and increase their job opportunities.

Similarly, under PA 3, project activities led to the improvement of public actors capacities in defining and manage public policies related to risk management or to environmental protection. For example:

- **REEHUB**, increased the capacities of policy makers in dealing with sustainable energy planning.

In some cases, benefits concern the economic actors themselves. For instance, under SO 1.1 and 2.1, several projects contributed to increase skills and competencies of the SMEs of the tourism sector:

- **HISTEK** contributed to increase skills and competences of workers, in particular in Albania and Montenegro, by training them on Key Enabling Technologies.
- **FILA** improved the innovation capacities of the SMEs of the agri-food sector.
- **INNOTOURCLUST**, through specific building digital labs, targeted the improvement of the skills of the economic actors of the tourism sector.
- **Co.Co.Tour** and **REGLPORTS** increased skills and competence of tourism actors in promoting sustainable and smart models.

Similarly, under the SO 2.2, projects activities led to increase the skills and the competences of the stakeholders in cultural and creative industries (e.g., **ADNICH** and **CIRCE** contributed to increase the skills and the competences of relevant actors in promoting innovative cultural and creative products).

The increase in the awareness and in the engagement of local actors is another impact, in particular for projects financed under PA 3 and PA 4. For instance:

- Under SO 3.1, **3 WATCH OUT** organized a series of workshops involving representatives of volunteer groups, physicians and paramedics, schoolteachers and students to raise awareness about hazards (seismic, fire, flooding) and measure to ensure the reduction of risks.
- Under SO 3.2, **WELCOME** carried out several awareness-raising activities in schools addressing young people and children. The project organised recycling lessons at schools, especially in those located in coastal municipalities. The activities involved all school levels, from childhood to high school, with a particular focus on primary and middle schools.

As the analysis of the outputs shows (see Table 10) a significant part of the projects analysed through the web-survey and the case studies carried out activities which supposed to contribute to the **improvement of the**

governance of the area such as the elaboration and/or implementation of joint strategies/actions plans/protocols or the monitoring activities. With regards to the impacts generated by the projects interventions (see Table 11), we can observe that, on the one hand, the contribution to the **improvement of the governance of the area** is one of the key results of the projects while, on the other that this type of impact mainly concerns PA 3 and PA 4. For instance:

- In the context of **WELCOME**, the University of Montenegro carried out specific monitoring activities that contributed to harmonise the monitoring approaches of Montenegro to the EU standards provided for by the EU Marine Framework Directory.
- **FLAT** created integrated initiatives and multilevel plans and tools for improving protection and risk management in flood-prone and landslide areas.
- In the field of natural protection **LASPEH** contributed to develop a transnational strategy to preserve common species and habitats, in particular for species protected by EU Directives 92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC and/or threatened by environmental variations caused by climate changes and wrong management.
- Through the “Trilateral Agreement – Memorandum of Understanding”, **SAGOV** paved the way for taking profit of possible opportunities in the South Adriatic Area that may arise from the Connectivity Agenda. Basically, during the conference that marked the end of the project activities (*Adriatic Connectivity Forum*, 18th of February 2021) representatives of both Italian and IPA public institutions discussed about a possible common/coordinated intervention in the broader framework of the so-called Corridor VIII.

In case of PA 1 and PA 2, despite the relevant number of activities and outputs related to the policy dimension, the impact on the governance is more limited. In other terms, analyses on projects financed under the 1st call suggest that the capacity of projects to harmonise, coordinate and integrate the cross-border policies is higher in the fields of environmental protection risks prevention/management and transport than in sectors such as tourism, culture and innovation policies.

Concerning other impacts common to more than one PA, it is worth noting that several of the projects analysed are increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of public services. For instance:

- Under SO 1.1 **PHASE**, by providing innovative solutions in the field of eHealth is increasing the quality (both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness) of the specific healthcare services.
- Under SO 3.1, **3 WATCH OUT**, **ADRINET**, **BLUE LAND**, **FLAT**, **LASPEH**, are contributing to increase the intervention capacity of the public actors in carrying out interventions for protecting environment and biodiversity.
- Under SO 4.1, **ON CLOUD NINE** is contributing to increase the quality of the transport services (and the passenger’s satisfaction on transport services).

For what concerns other types of impacts related to single SO, data collected shows the contribution of projects under SO 2.1 to **increase the attractiveness of the cooperation area**. This represents a direct result common to all projects analysed under SO 2.1. For example, **3D-IMP-ACT** and **Co.Co.Tour** promoted the touristic attractiveness of the area by developing specific ICT solutions. **NEST** worked on the development of new strategies and approaches to better valorise the natural and cultural assets of the area.

6.3 CROSS BORDER ADDED VALUE

Most of the project partners consider that cross border cooperation help promoting transfers of good practices (66% of respondents) and the setting up of transnational networks (62%). Approximately half of the respondents consider that the added value relies on the contribution to EU objectives. Around one-third of LP taking part to the survey, perceive the cooperation as an opportunity to promoting better governance and to facing common threats and obstacles. On the other hand, the percentage of respondents who perceive benefit related to economies of scale or to the movement of people and goods is more limited.

Table 12 What is the added value of your project?

	TOT	SO 1.1	SO 2.1	SO 2.2	SO 3.1	SO 3.2	SO 4.1
It contributes to achieve common European objectives	52%	50%	17%	50%	75%	100%	0%
It allows to achieve economic scale	10%	13%	17%	0%	0%	0%	50%
It promotes and transfers good practices	66%	75%	50%	100%	63%	100%	0%
It promotes a better governance	41%	25%	50%	0%	75%	0%	50%
It allows to face common threats and obstacles	31%	38%	0%	50%	50%	0%	50%
It facilitates the movement of people and goods	10%	13%	17%	0%	0%	0%	50%
It promotes international networks	62%	63%	67%	100%	63%	33%	50%

Source: web-survey

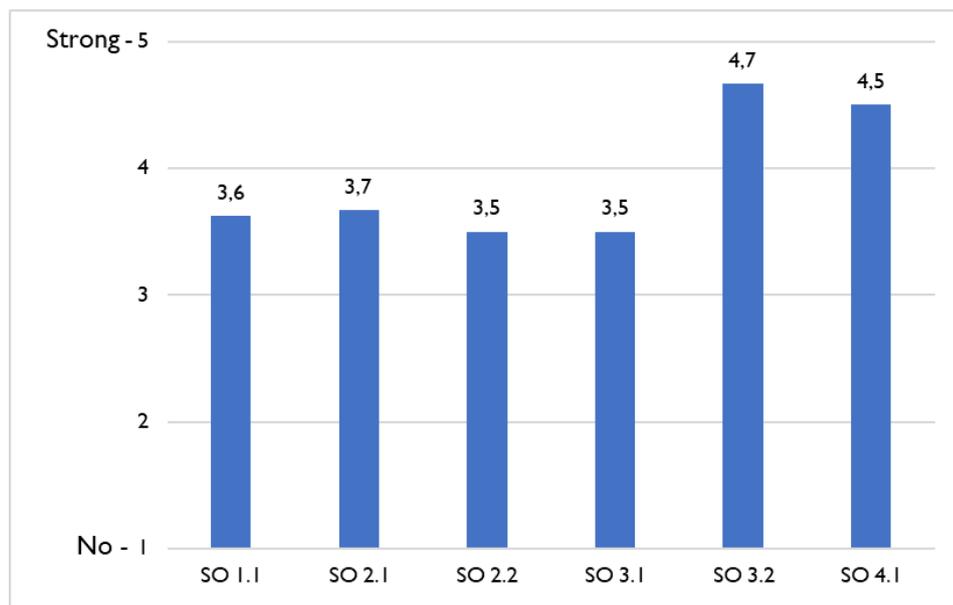
In general, the project evaluation surveys launched by the JS and addressed to project partners, confirms that projects' main added value rely in the increase cooperation among partners and transfer of good practices. Target groups interviews revealed that almost the totally of the projects lead to a concrete benefit and improvement also for the entire Programme area (Puglia-Molise-Albania-Montenegro).

6.4 CONTRIBUTION TO EUSAIR

The analysis of the contribution of the Programme to EUSAIR will be the object of a specific report (to be submitted by the end 2021). This section presents some preliminary findings based on the answers provided by the lead partners of the projects financed under the 1st call.

As illustrated by the table below, lead partners perceive that their projects are contributing to EUSAIR with a good level of intensity. The contribution is perceived as particularly strong in the case of LP from SO 3.2 and SO 4.1. Under SO 4.1, SAGOV's LP underlines how the establishment of a centre of excellence for maritime affairs in Durres contributes to a better coordination of the marine connectivity, in line with one the EUSAIR key objectives.

Figure 2 How much does your project contribute to EUSAIR?(1=no contribution / 5= strong contribution)



Source: web-survey

Secondo ARTI mancano le conclusioni, erano stati forniti suggerimenti a t33 nella versione precedente commentata a pag. 2)

7 Annexes – Case study reports

This section contains the case study reports of the 9 selected projects. Case studies have been selected in accordance with the JS. Project selection has been done with the aim of guaranteeing a well-balanced coverage among programme specific objectives and countries.

The main sources of information are the interviews with the project lead partner and project partner. Additionally, case studies have been elaborated based on the desk analysis of the project application form, web survey, material received from the project partners, project websites.

Detailed information per each project is reported below.



Interreg - IPA CBC

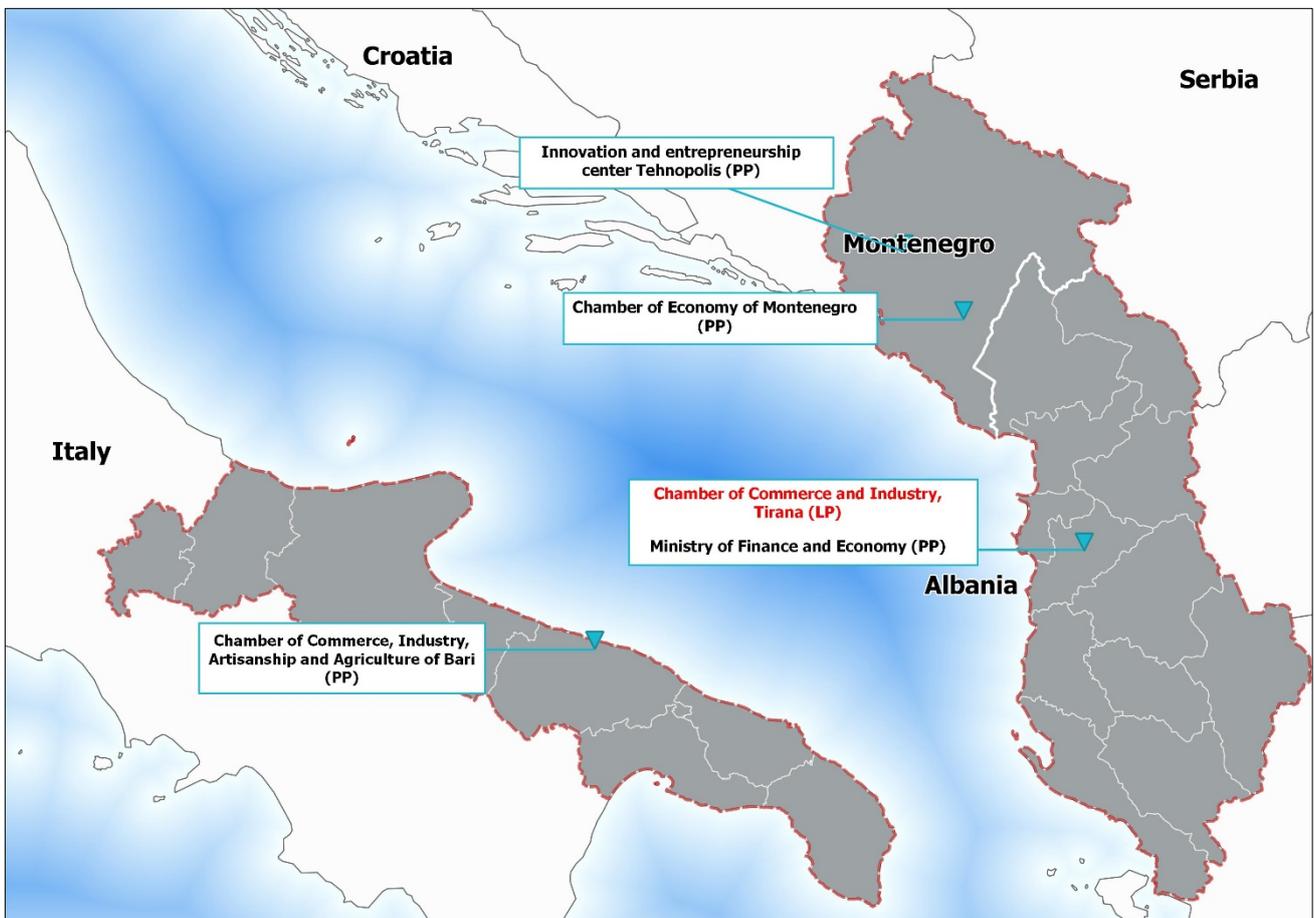
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



BRE

Business Registry Empowerment

Case study report



The Project in a nutshell



BRE project



PRIORITY AXIS 1: COMPETITIVENESS OF SMEs

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1.1

Enhance the framework conditions for the development of SME's cross-border market

Start
March 2018

The project is at its final stages

End
July 2021



NEEDS ADDRESSED

Low innovation rate in the area, lack of harmonisation among Business Registries

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

SMEs, business support organisation, national authorities

PARTNERSHIP



5 partners



LEAD PARTNER

Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tirana

PROJECT OUTPUTS*



23 enterprises receiving non-financial support



- businesses/research institutions involved (scheduled end-July)

PROJECT BUDGET

EUR
1 124 046

Contract total

EUR
955 439

of which IPA funds

EUR
168 607

Co-financing

* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 15.03.2018

Ending date: 14.07.2021

Duration: 40 months

Overall budget: | 124.046.47 Euro

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 597 463.20 Euro

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tirana	ALBANIA	Tirana	300 207.17	135 784.62
PP	Ministry of Finance and Economy	ALBANIA	Tirana	145 330.13	42 869.80
PP	Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Artisanship and Agriculture of Bari	ITALY	Bari	292 231.46	141 362.59
PP	Chamber of Economy of Montenegro	MONTENEGRO	Podgorica	240 913.59	140 393.12
PP	Innovation and entrepreneurship centre Tehnopolis	MONTENEGRO	Nikšić	145 364.12	137 053.07

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

Coordination among European Business Registries is a key factor for a joint continental business environment, producing administrative harmonization, transparency, legal certainty, competitiveness. Countries with efficient e-registries tend to have shorter incorporation timeframe, fewer bureaucratic procedures and lower entry costs.

While EU member states already have a coordinated Business Register system, Pre-Accession Countries (e.g. Albania and Montenegro) did not make significant steps towards the issue.

Furthermore, while Montenegrin SMEs are obliged to register to the Chambers of Commerce, Albanian SMEs do not have such obligation. However, in both countries the only available registers are the ones of the national Tax Authorities, which were created for fiscal purposes, so the information is neither organised nor structured in a comprehensive and detailed manner, making it not usable for business purposes.

The BRE project aims at creating a transnational tool to exchange and improve experiences among Italian, Albanian and Montenegrin business registries on 3 levels: legislative (laws, actors involved, policies), operational (process management) and technology (software, hardware, outputs).

The final aim is to connect business registries from Italy, Albania and Montenegro, so that existing enterprises, start-ups, networks and clusters can be mapped and registered in order to facilitate business cooperation among them. BRE wants to empower regional Chambers of Commerce, Ministries and IT providers through the provision of new policies, process management skills and IT instruments, but above all SMEs with better cross-border partner search, higher legality and competitiveness.

By developing the BRE Platform and setting tailored training and dissemination actions, the project wants to provide long-term instruments addressed to companies: this will enhance the cross-border business environment, by facilitating information access, providing transparency and accuracy of data, reducing costs and strengthening efficiency for SMEs.

As per Application Form, Project Specific Objectives are:

- 1 - Enhancing the framework conditions for the development of SMEs' competitiveness
- 2 - Setting up networking actions of business support organizations and public institutions promoting CB cooperation
- 3 - Developing capacity building and training schemes benefitting the SMEs internationalization

How was the partnership set up?

The three Chambers of Commerce (Bari, Tirana and Montenegro) have already collaborated in the framework of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce and already discussed the idea of transferring competences from the Italian model towards Albania and Montenegro.

Also, the three targeted regions already have strong commercial links and partnerships (many SMEs from Puglia have a branch or partner companies in Albania or Montenegro) and such register was seen as a gap to be filled for the advantage of the whole programme area.

Such common objectives and pre-existing relations highly facilitated the project preparation phase, in which partners did not report specific issues.

Apart from the Chambers of Commerce, the partnership displays other types of partners that were identified for the provision of support to the preparation of the register, namely that would help identifying the SMEs to be registered (such as Tehnopolis, which has direct contacts with start-ups and clusters, providing higher chances to involve innovative entities).

Project implementation

The project firstly carried out the partners' needs assessment and the analysis of the state of the art in the three countries. In parallel, a benchmarking analysis was carried out to assess the legal framework in the 3 countries. Then, 15 (3 per partner) round tables were carried out for the involvement of companies, together with surveys and interviews in order to ensure a participatory design of the platform.

300 companies (100 per country) were selected out of specific economic sectors (fashion, ICT, agri-food and tourism) in order to enhance the impact of the initiative at the local level and increase the networking and the B2B effects on economic competitiveness. The involved companies answered to an open call developed by the partners in order to avoid the possible application of state aid regulations to these SMEs support activities.



Interreg-IPA CBC
Italy - Albania - Montenegro
BRE

HOW TO ORGANIZE A
**shadow day in
cooperation projects**

Source: BRE project, Round table

issues of internationalisation and collaborative innovation. Lastly, B2B events with selected SMEs are planned to be held in May-June 2021. All activities were carried out in Bari, Tirana and Podgorica (when in person), but reached out to enterprises from the whole region.

Apart from WP Management and WP Communication, the project displays 3 WPs:

- 1) Mapping and involvement of companies;
- 2) BRE Partner Query Platform;
- 3) capacity building activities.

What output indicator does your project contribute to?

According to the information collected, activities are about to be finalised and the Lead Partner expects to achieve the outputs by the end of the project (14th July 2021).

By the time data were collected (April 2021), the programme output indicators partially reached their target value, as explained in the table below.

Programme indicator	output	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support		Transnational business classification criteria	1	1
		BRE Partner Query Platform	1	1
		Infopoints for companies	3	3
		Training and mentoring courses for CCI employees	3	3 – in progress
		Training courses for beneficiaries	15	15 – in progress
		Transnational B2B meeting	18	0 (scheduled for mid-June 2021)
Number of business and research institutions		Consortium agreement	1	0 (scheduled for the final conference in July 2021)

Infopoints were set up in each Chamber of Commerce. Also, the suitable platform for the registry was identified and the Lead partner is preparing two types of platform manuals (one for CCIs and the other for users). The platform was and is being disseminated through promotional actions. Capacity building actions are planned in shape of “shadow days” in which 4 selected employees of the 3 CCIs spend a day in joint working with his/her peer in order to learn different ways of working (the last “shadow day” will be organised online).

Also, the project organised training sessions, video lessons and webinars in each country addressed to SMEs on the

involved/offering non-financial support			
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The analysis and identification of CB classification criteria was carried out in the first stage of the project. To the day interviews were conducted (April 2021), the platform is being finalised and will be made public in the short term (before the end of the project – July 2021). The manuals for CCIs employees and for beneficiaries are also being finalised, while the transnational B2B meetings will be held in June 2021 and are expected to involve 60 enterprises from the three partner countries. Lastly, the Consortium agreement in shape of Memorandum of Understanding will be signed during the project Final Conference in July 2021.

The interviewed partners do not notice relevant territorial differences: the project results are similar and at a very close level in each of the countries.

Differences are rather in the levels of participation in the different sectors because of the heterogeneous national economic setting.

Although most activities were carried out in the main cities of the programme area (Bari, Podgorica, Tirana), the involved and targeted SMEs are both from urban and semi-urban areas.

Which factors has hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how the COVID is influencing the project implementation?

The synergy of objectives highly facilitated the implementation of activities: all partners had a clear idea of the project's outcomes and advantages, so it was easy to operate jointly.

For what concerns COVID, the pandemics had an extremely negative impact on the activities: many enterprises closed or temporarily stopped their activity. According to a survey carried out by the Chamber of Commerce of Tirana, more than 40% of the registered enterprises had stopped their activities in 2020. Also, it was difficult to engage those enterprises who did not stop their activities and to persuade them in investing their time in participating to the B2B meetings.

Also the LP was affected by the problem of understaffing and loss of personnel, so it was not easy to manage BRE and other I I ongoing projects.

Also, activities conducted online are not as impactful as the ones in person, furthermore the unpredictability of the events throughout the pandemics created uncertainty and it became difficult to plan activities.

In Albania it was not easy to involve the state administrations (e.g. Tax Authority managing the national business register) because the access to those data is upon the payment of a fee, so there was limited proneness in collaborating.

Lastly, internal political changes in the Albanian Ministry prevented this partner from fully taking part to the project activities.

For what concerns the cashflow, a major problem was that the reimbursement for the LP was arriving with strong delays. The Albanian Ministry of Economy is supposed to pay in advance before expenditures reimbursement, but this does not always happen (although interviewees were not able to elaborate on this aspect and better explain the procedure), and partners have to wait for payments from the MA following joint progress reports. This creates problems to the procurement of external expertise and subsequent delays in project activities implementation.

This is a major problem especially for smaller partners (e.g. NGOs) that cannot implement activities because they don't have other funds that can support them before the reimbursement is dispensed.

Project results

What are the results achieved by the project?

Project partners, under the supervision of the University of Montenegro, jointly worked to identify transnational criteria focused on activity code, legal form and outputs description.

The platform was successfully created and is currently in the testing phase.

All activities involved continuous consultations within and outside the partnership, including also surveys with regional SMEs to better identify their needs and co-build the set of criteria and the mentoring activities.

The activities were conducted through exchange of emails and finalised during project meetings (in person before 2020, online after the start of the pandemics).

The table below shows the target and achieved value of the result indicator selected by the project. The data were retrieved in May 2021, but they should be updated in the following months, as the activities are still ongoing.

Programme result indicator	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Common interventions aimed to improve the cross-border framework	Number of institutions adopting new and/or improved strategies and action plans	7	6
	Number of institutions applying new and/or improved tools and services	300	180
	Amount of funds leveraged based on Project achievements	0	0
	Number of jobs created (FTE) based on project achievements	0	0
	Number of trained persons	660	400

The LP reports that further capacity building activities will be carried out between June and July, thus the number of trained persons is expected to reach the target.

What is the added value of your project?

BRE project meets the specific objective of the Programme that aims at enhancing the framework conditions for the development of SME's cross-border market, in order to favour the collaboration among companies.

The programme area countries were already interconnected economically, given the solid business relations between Apulia Region and Albania, as well as Montenegro, although with a limited extent. Such condition constitutes a strong potential for structuring and enhancing the possibilities of cross-border business.

For this reason, the added value of cross border cooperation lies in the joint establishment of a structured tool that can contribute and give a framework to pre-existing economic business relations that will be further developed. The tool has been planned and built in consultation with all the involved partners and stakeholders in order to meet the needs of all involved entities, both promoters and beneficiaries.

Project partners report that territorial differences did not affect the outcome of the project, however at this stage it is not easy to assess the territoriality of the impact, as the project activities are still ongoing and the results will be seen once the SMEs will be able to interconnect with each other and to start collaboration.

Finally, BRE is directly contributing to the accession process of Albania and Montenegro: as per the latest (2020) EC report on the progress made by IPA countries towards EU accession and harmonisation to EU acquis Communautaire, Albania has made progresses in company law but is still far from the EU standards. Montenegro instead has reached a good level of preparation on company Law, however the EU recommends

that Montenegro adopts the rulebook on the workings of the Central Register of Economic Entities and adopts the amended Law on accounting and the rulebook on company financial statements.

Durability and capitalisation potential

The partners are intending to make outputs and results sustainable over time and this is already foreseen in the project's structure: the WP3 (capacity building) includes the preparation of video-lessons (prepared by Tehnopolis) and webinars (the 3 CCIs) on the use of the platform and on how to attract enterprises. Such outputs are planned to stay available beyond the project's duration by being uploaded on the project website for being downloaded for free by interested users.

Also, the partnership is intending to give continuity to the project's results beyond the end of the project itself with a new project that can give sustainability to the infopoints inside the Chambers of Commerce. However, at this stage, as the project is still ongoing, the idea has not been structured yet.

Furthermore, negotiations are ongoing with relevant public authorities in order to increase the synergy between the national and the BRE platforms. There is the availability of national funds but this possibility has not been explored yet.

A key factor is the political will to ensure sustainability: while all the Chambers of Commerce have strong interest in maintaining the results operational, there should also be a certain level of financial and non-financial involvement of the state and of the external donors.

The Montenegrin partner Tehnopolis observes that the participatory approach in the ongoing programming phase is very useful for potential applicants to provide information on what are their needs, and it ensures higher sustainability, as well as higher chances to present new projects.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

The project met administrative obstacles since Montenegrin and Italian SMEs are obliged to register to the Chambers of Commerce, Albanian SMEs do not have such obligation. Enterprises in the country are registered at the Tax Authority, but it was not easy to involve this state administrations and to obtain the data, as accessing them is upon the payment of a fee.

Thus, Albanian partners faced higher problems in reaching out to enterprises. This was partially solved with the organisation of round table and activities that could help the CCI of Tirana to obtain visibility and invite enterprises in being involved in the project activities and register in the BRE platform.



Interreg - IPA CBC

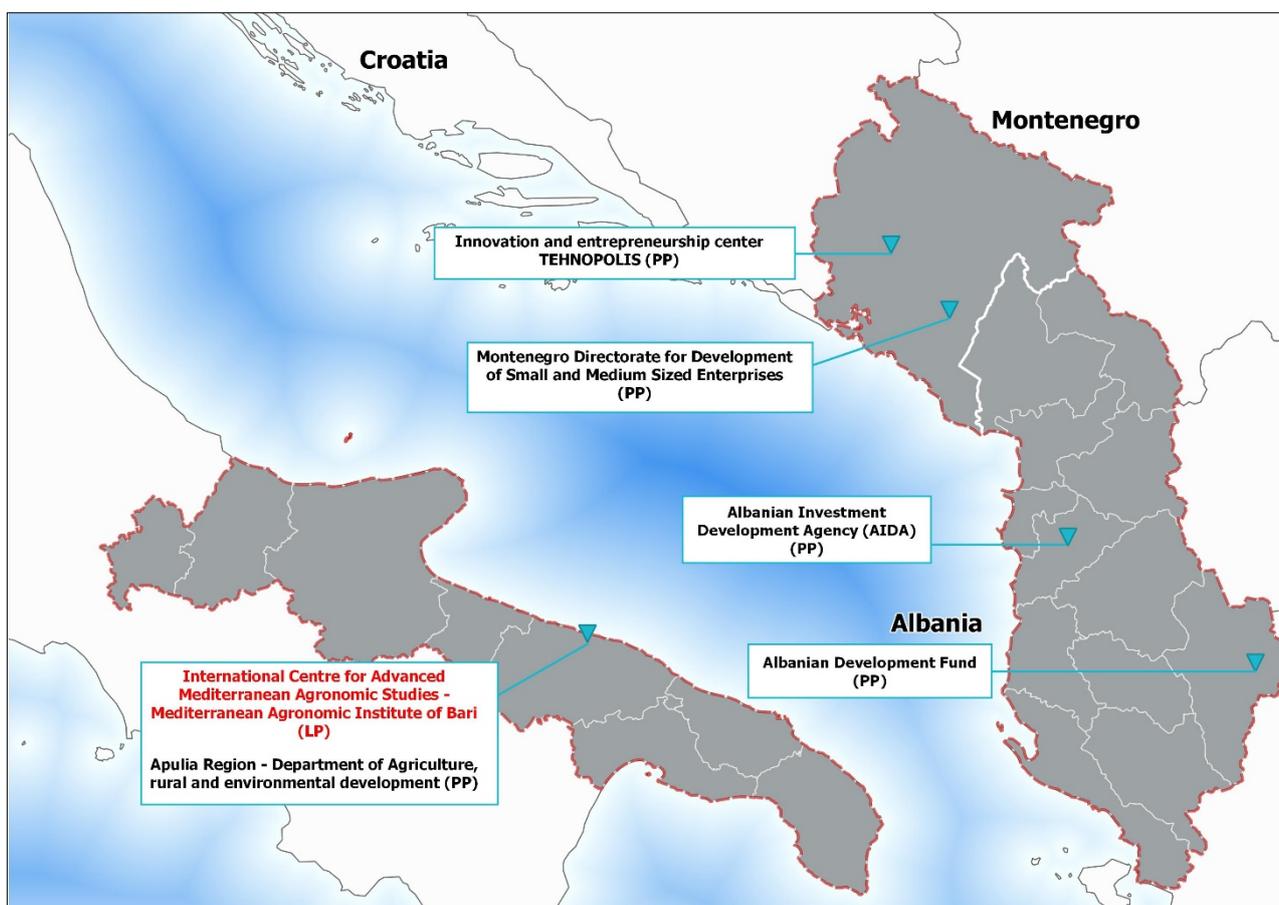
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



FILA

Strengthening and empowering of cross border innovation networks through Fertilization Innovation Labs in Agro-food for improving the connection between research and SMEs (EIP Approach)

Case study report



The project in a nutshell



FILA project



PRIORITY AXIS 1: COMPETITIVENESS OF SMEs

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1.1

Enhance the framework conditions for the development of SME's cross-border market

Start
April 2018

The project is closed

End
December 2020



NEEDS ADDRESSED

Lack of innovation in the agri-food sector

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

SMEs, University and research centers, business support organisation

PARTNERSHIP



6 partners



LEAD PARTNER
Mediterranean
Agronomic Institute of
Bari

PROJECT OUTPUTS*



22 enterprises receiving non-financial support



54 businesses/research institutions involved

PROJECT BUDGET

EUR
1 044 548

Contract total

EUR
887 866

of which IPA funds

EUR
156 682

Co-financing

* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 01.04.2018

Ending date: 31.12.2020

Duration: 33 months

Overall budget: 1 044 547.80 Euro

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 745 797.39 Euro

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	CIHEAM Bari Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari	ITALY	Bari	421 793.95	276 675.21
PP	Apulia Region	ITALY	Bari	21 928.49	21 928.49
pp	Albanian Development Fund	ALBANIA	Tirana	181 348.75	128 525.15
pp	Albanian Investment Development Agency	ALBANIA	Tirana	119 618.61	56 542.64
pp	Montenegro Directorate for Development of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises	MONTENEGRO	Podgorica	116 595.20	85 736.69
pp	Innovation and entrepreneurship centre Tehnopolis	MONTENEGRO	Nikšić	183 262.80	176 389.21

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

The idea behind the implementation of FILA project stems from a lack of the innovation system mainly referred to agri-food sector. The Programme area presents a weakness of micro and SMEs competitiveness mainly due to a poor level of innovation in the field of agricultural productivity. Thus, the common challenge of countries/region involved in the project is to address this critical issue, by encouraging cooperation between research and businesses, in order to increase the level of competitiveness and innovation in agri-food companies of the cross-border area.

The FILA project promotes innovative solutions in the field of the agri-food sector, by enhancing the interaction between research and SMEs. Through the realisation of cross border “Fertilization and Innovation Labs in Agri-food”, FILA intends to improve the capacity of SMEs in finding innovative solutions to address critical issues related to the agri-food sector. FILA Labs represent main results of the project, enabling the sharing of innovative solutions between relevant stakeholders and actors operating in the agri-food sector. FILA Labs are both physical and virtual environments in which stakeholders of the agri-food sector meet in order to identify needs and innovative solutions in the agricultural field. The aim of the project is the identification of a FILA Lab model, enabling Programme area partners to improve their capacity to foster the agro-food businesses competitiveness by the means of research and innovation. The ultimate goal of the

project is the development of innovative enterprises and start-ups, by improving competitiveness and creating jobs, mostly for young people.

From a legal standpoint, FILA project has been implemented in the framework of *European Innovation Partnership - AGRI* strategy⁷, referring to agricultural and rural sustainability. This strategy involves several actors, which through the sharing of knowledge, information and competences, constitute the Operational Groups. These groups are only one of many partnerships that have been set up in frame of the project that support the creation of both cross border and regional FILA networks.

How was the partnership set up?

The partnership is composed by 6 partners, 2 for each country/region. The partnership set up differed from partner to partner. As an example, the partnership between Apulia Region and CIHEAM Bari has born from an already existing long-term cooperation among the two bodies. For the Albanian and Montenegrin partners, the lead partner carried out several meetings to identify potential organisations, which have been selected on the basis of their competencies and knowledge. In this regard, it is important to underline that the representing agency of Apulia Region based in Tirana has been very helpful in connecting Albanian partners with CIHEAM Bari and promoting this cross-border cooperation. Nonetheless, during project implementation, Apulia Region withdrew from the partnership, due to a lack of administrative staff dealing with the project management. A similar problem has been observed also with the Albanian partner *AIDA Albanian Investment Development Agency*: during project implementation the partner faced a staff turnover that has delayed the development of project activities.

The project also includes two associated partners: the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration of Albania, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro.

Project implementation

According to the project plan, the implementation of FILA LABs are the most relevant project activity. Three LABs have been implemented in the Programme area, precisely in Korçe (Albania), in Niksic (Montenegro) and in Bari (Apulia Region - Italy)

FILA LABs have been implemented following the above-mentioned EIP-AGRI guidelines referring to sustainable agriculture and rural sectors. FILA LABs have been implemented through a participatory approach, involving businesses and research institutes coming from the three countries/regions. Before the realisation of FILA LABs each partner has followed a specific procedure: 3 workshops/meetings gathering local, regional and international actors operating both in the agri-food sector and innovation have been organised. Each meeting was based on a specific topic depending on stakeholders' interest. Such approach has granted an integrated exchange of knowledge between the involved actors, enabling them to achieve the outputs identified in the project plan.

What output indicator does your project contribute to?

The main project outputs refer to:

Fertilization Innovation Lab in Agro-food model, whose realisation relies on the collection of the best practices coming from partners' experiences, by involving local innovation actors taking part to the operating groups

⁷ *European Innovation Partnership – AGRI (EIP-AGRI)* is a strategy launched by the European Commission to enhance research and innovation by fostering a competitive and sustainable agriculture sector. In order to achieve this goal, EIP-AGRI gathers together most relevant actors in the innovation sector (farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs, etc) to promote cooperation between research and business. <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/european-innovation-partnership-agricultural>

and the realisation of the living labs on agro-food issues as a moment of knowledge exchange among innovation actors.

Realization of 3 FILA Labs in Korçe (Albania). managed by ADF, in Niksic (Montenegro) managed by Tehnopolis and in Bari (Apulia Region) managed by CIHEAM - The three LABs have been implemented in all the three countries, according to the project plan. However, this process was not straightforward in all the three countries. Indeed, the Albanian partner, ADF, faced many delays in implementing the lab, not only because of the Covid-19 pandemic - that postponed the planned activities (i.e. bringing together stakeholders' community of practice) - but also due to the lack of expertise in the innovation sector. Additionally, ADF did not dispose of an already existing infrastructure in which the lab could have been realized. Because of all the above-mentioned reasons, the Albanian lab has been set up with delay. As regards Montenegro, the country has a well-structured innovation sector and Tehnopolis, the partner responsible for the implementation of the FILA LAB in the country, has already experienced the creation of similar innovation infrastructures.



Source: Fila Lab in Apulia, 8 January 2021

Realization of a cross-border network among FILAs, to be realised through the increasing cooperation among innovation chain actors operating in their respective community of practice. This networking activity is supported by the “Implementation of the Agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI): state of play and indications for the new 2021-2027 programming period in Italy, Albania, and Montenegro Cooperating for innovation in agriculture “policy paper”. The document has been elaborated mainly by CIHEM IAMB with the involvement of Rete Rurale Italiana (responsible for the monitoring of the 16.2 EIP measure⁸. Albanian and Montenegrin partners conducted several interviews whose findings resulted in the formulation of ten recommendations included in the policy paper. The policy paper has been presented to a wider public during the online final project conference, organised by CIHEAM Bari on the 18th of December 2020 (more than 80 participants).

This scientific document is relevant not only for supporting agro-food and innovation actors to follow specific guidelines to address critical issues, but also to help policy makers in the implementation of agro-food policies and enhancing cooperation between businesses and research institutions in order to strengthen competitiveness of this chain. In this regard, it is important to observe that thanks to the policy paper, Albanian partners influenced the Albanian government Agenda. Indeed, the paper oriented the elaboration of a new legislation for agriculture and agri-food sector in Albania. In addition, thanks to the project, ADF has also enhanced contacts with the Ministry of Agriculture, which has given a positive feedback on the project.

The table below shows the main project output achievements against the targets established in the project application form.

⁸ “Sub-measure 16.2 supports the OG’s implementation of pilot projects and development activities of new products, practices, processes and technologies in the agri-food and forestry sector, as well as the transfer and dissemination of the results obtained”. Source: Implementation of the Agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI): state of play and indications for the new 2021-2027 programming period in Italy, Albania, and Montenegro Cooperating for innovation in agriculture Policy paper

Programme output indicator	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Realization of 3 FILA Labs in Albania (Korçe - PP3), Montenegro (Niksic - PP5), Apulia (Bari, LP)	30	22
Number of business and research institutions involved/offering non-financial support.	Fertilization Innovation Lab in Agro-food model Realization of 3 FILA Labs in Albania (Korçe - PP3), Montenegro (Niksic - PP5), Apulia (Bari, LP) Realization of a cross-border network among FILAs	30	54

As shown in the table, the project exceeded the target value of the indicator “Number of business and research institutions involved/offering non-financial support” while, as regards the indicator “Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support”, the indicator reached a value of 22 enterprises on a target of 30.

Which factors has hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how the COVID is influencing the project implementation?

One of the main factors that hampered project implementation was related to the reporting and certification procedures, especially for the Albanian partners. Indeed, they faced difficulties for opening a dedicated bank account, which is, in general, an issue for all Albanian public administrations. In addition, the Agjensia e Zhvillimit Rajonal nr.3, initial project partner, has been incorporated by ADF and this generated other delays.

The spread of Covid-19 pandemic has impacted project implementation. Project activities have been extended and rescheduled. Indeed, the project converted almost all the in-presence activities to online activities. Additionally, due to the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, the project benefitted from a major change procedure agreed with the JS, enabling partners to have 9 extra months to conclude the activities and also a budget amendment. Furthermore, the project succeeded in involving to project events relevant personalities in the field of agri-food sector. Indeed, Covid-19 forced all in presence events to be organised online and this allow to involve experts whose participation to project events would have been difficult without using online platforms.

The pandemic has affected project partners differently.

Covid-19 lockdowns arrived when ADF was implementing most part of the FILA LABs activities, such as, gather all stakeholder’s community of practice. This implied difficulties not only for the in-presence activities – with the impossibility to involve stakeholders (farmers or public authorities) -, but also for the online activities (due to poor internet access in those territories, preventing people to be interconnected). It is also important to note that Albanian partners also faced difficulties due to the scarce innovation context of the country (i.e. in Albania there is no specific law referring to the implementation and the management of start-ups). As an example, it was difficult for ADF to introduce the concept of operating groups, involving all relevant stakeholders in the agri-food sector).

The case of Montenegro is totally different from the Albanian one. In Montenegro, Covid-19 pandemic did not prevent the project implementation. Indeed, through a remodulation of project activities, Montenegro took advantage from the pandemic situation by converting the 3D printer, previously used for the agricultural purpose, to produce medical equipment for its project staff.

Project results

What are the results achieved by the project?

According to the project application form, the programme result indicator “Common interventions aimed to improve the cross-border framework conditions in which the facilitators of competitiveness operate” has achieved its target. The project concretely realised the 3 interlinked local FILA LABs.

The following table shows more in detail the achieved project results.

Programme result indicator	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Common interventions aimed to improve the cross-border framework conditions in which the facilitators of competitiveness operate	Creation of n°3 interlinked local “Fertilization and innovation labs in Agro-food”	1	1

What is the added value of your project?

Following the information collected in the web survey, it can be observed that the project:

- contributes to achieve common European objectives;
- allows to face common threats and obstacles;
- promotes international networks.

Firstly, FILA project contributes to the Programme objective *1.1 Enhance the framework conditions for the development of SME's cross-border market*, through a wider cooperation between research and enterprises. FILA project also contributes to address one of the main critical issues of the Programme area, namely: “insufficient cooperation among SME's, business support organization and research centres”⁹.

Additionally, the realisation of the three FILA labs and the creation of cross-border network among FILAs, support the promotion of international and regional networks. As an example, the involvement of OG (Operational Groups) in the frame of EIP strategy, (more than 30 approved in the Apulia region), will strengthen the networks in the field of agro-food sector through a wider collaboration among innovation actors.

Durability and capitalisation potential

Project durability and capitalisation potential are ensured by the competences acquired during project development as regards the intangible and tangible deliverables.

Indeed, the creation of FILA lab in Bari allowed the launch of a master that takes place in the FILA lab, involving several SMEs and research institutes (e.g. the University of Bari). This promotes the collaboration between research and businesses, as one of the main goals of the project, but also grant the sustainability of the project activities.

In Albania it can be observed a similar approach granting the durability of the project: the University of Korçë, with proof competences on agri-food sector and innovation, will managed the FILA Lab after the project. In

⁹Project Application Form, pag.17

Montenegro, thanks to the long-term experience in implementing similar labs, partners will capitalise the FILA experience.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

Following the analysis of Programme documents and through the interviews conducted by the evaluator, emerging obstacles related to the legal dimension are reported. However, these obstacles are strictly related to the specificities of the countries and not referred to the cross-border cooperation itself.



Interreg - IPA CBC

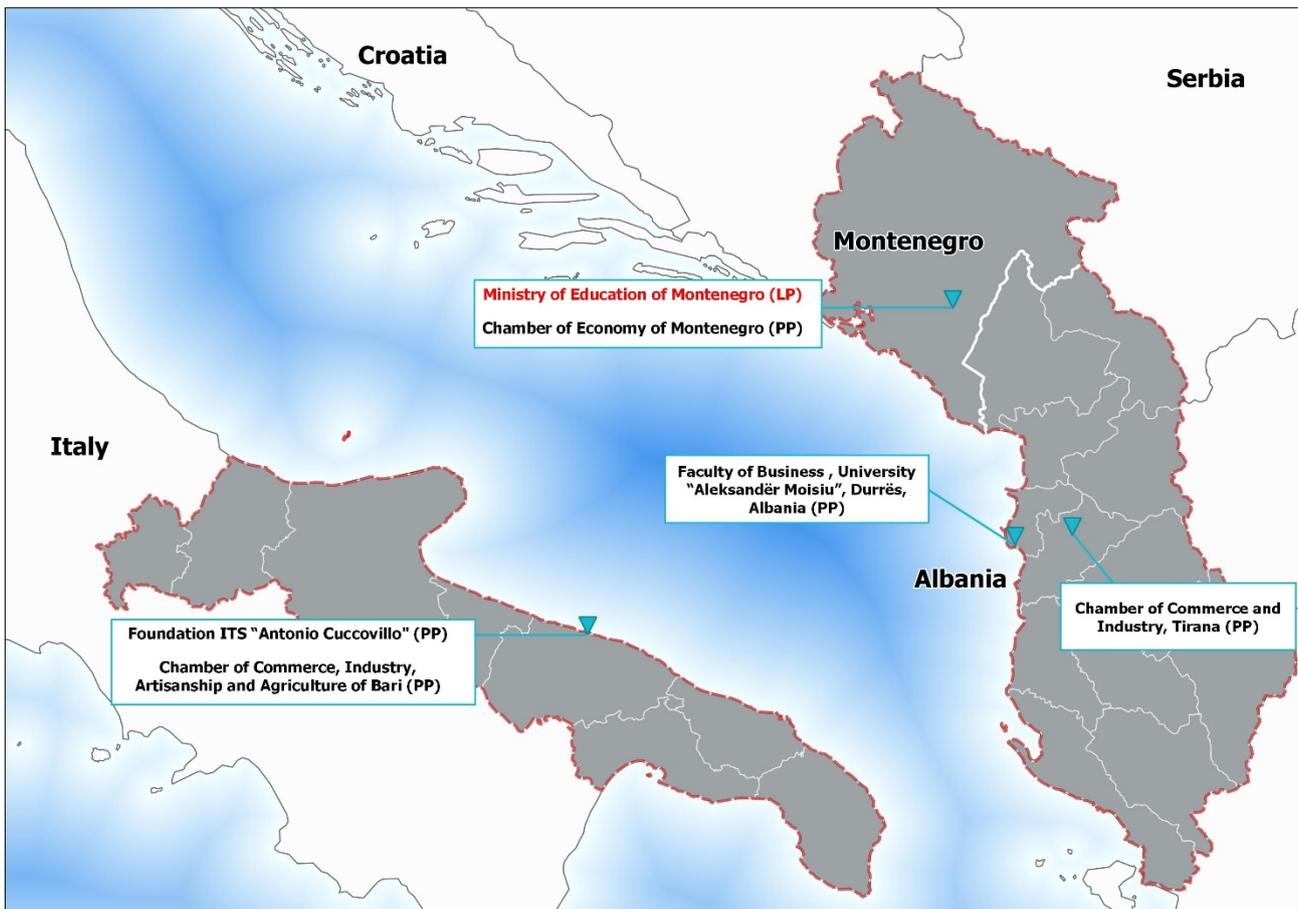
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



HISTEK

High Specialized Technicians in Kets

Case study report



The project in a nutshell



HISTEK project



PRIORITY AXIS 1: COMPETITIVENESS OF SMEs

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1.1

Enhance the framework conditions for the development of SME's cross-border market

Start
April 2018

The project is at its final stages

End
June 2021



NEEDS ADDRESSED

improve people knowledge, capacities and competencies (tertiary education offer)

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

Higher education and research, SMEs, national authorities

PARTNERSHIP



6 partners



LEAD PARTNER

Ministry of Education of Montenegro

PROJECT OUTPUTS*



1 enterprises receiving non-financial support



2 businesses/research institutions involved

PROJECT BUDGET

EUR
1 099 538

Contract total

EUR
934 608

of which IPA funds

EUR
164 931

Co-financing

* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 03.04.2018

Ending date: 30.06.2021

Duration: 38 months 28 days

Overall budget: 1 099 538.36 EUR

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 608 741.59 EUR

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	Ministry of Education of Montenegro	MONTENEGRO	Podgorica	230 110.22	127 321.79
PP	Chamber of Economy of Montenegro	MONTENEGRO	Podgorica	170 945.73	116 023.19
PP	Foundation ITS "Antonio Cuccovillo"	ITALY	Bari	147 970.65	67 422.39
PP	Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Artisanship and Agriculture of Bari	ITALY	Bari	229 400.82	141 652.59
PP	Faculty of Business, University "Aleksandër Moisiu"	ALBANIA	Durrës	164 260.43	75 074.33
PP	Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tirana	ALBANIA	Tirana	156 850.51	81 247.30

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

In order to improve SMEs' competitiveness and innovation, one of the most important leverages is represented by human resources: companies, especially those ones that have already or intend to establish new branches in the programme area, need very highly qualified technicians with internationally recognised skills, to allow and to favour their mobility in the 3 countries/region. This represents a strategic framework condition for the development of SME's cross-border market.

For this reason, HISTEK aims at enhancing SMEs' capacities of competitiveness, innovation and internationalization through the creation of a new cross border cluster in the field of education enabling the creation of common tools for assessing SMEs' needs in terms of human resources. Thus, the aim of the project is to create common standards to be adopted in the education systems for the training of highly qualified young technicians.

The cross-border cluster's members are SMEs, Training Organizations and Public Institutions, strongly committed to set-up and maintain a cross-border innovation community in order to promote an innovative

network able to implement effective synergies between educational institutions and enterprises, and train young people on Key Enabling Technologies (KETs).

Another objective that the project wants to reach is to set the basis for the introduction of the 5th level of EQF for KETs in the programme area.

While such offer is partially present in Albania, although not being fully structured nor spread throughout the country, in Montenegro it is totally non existing. Italy, instead, has a certified system that is seen as a best practice at the EU level.

The idea of a common framework was born under the impulse of common needs, not only of IPA countries but also of Italian SMEs working in IPA countries and needing to increase the skills of Albanian and Montenegrin workers. Particularly, the Chambers of Commerce involved in the partnership had strong interest in establishing a framework of skills assessment to promote regional labour mobility and to address the mismatch between education qualifications and the labour market.



Source: HISTEK project, Mid-term Review Meeting in Podgorica

How was the partnership set up?

The partnership involves representatives from educational institutes and Chambers of Commerce, as well as institutional partners at the national level, in order to combine the competences and needs of capacity providing entities and then capitalise the achievements at the policy level (such as the Ministry of Education of Montenegro).

As for Albania, the country is represented by a Chamber of Commerce and by an educational institute, namely the Faculty of Business of the University “Aleksandër Moisiu” which is the only entity that is offering 5th EQF level courses in Albania.

The project also includes one associated partner, namely: the Italian Ministry of Education

Project implementation

What output indicator does your project contribute to?

Project implementation foresees several specific objectives, which correspond to project outputs. Firstly, the project started from the identification and the analysis of SMEs needs and key competences with a specific focus on KETs, in order to define a common highly specialized profile to foster innovation, business development and competitiveness within Cross-Border SMEs. This will allow the creation of a joint transnational tertiary education curriculum customized on the specific needs of cross-border SMEs with co-designed (SMEs/Training Institutions) modules characterized by strong cross fertilization of competencies and involvement of both SMEs and educational also in teaching activities

Also, the project intends to create a dedicated cluster that acts as a networked innovation community able to improve the process of developing young people’s technical skills (and in particular on KETs) giving a tangible answer to specific cross-border SMEs needs. Additionally, following the project plan, HISTEK wants also to create dedicated Toolkits and Guidelines for improving SMEs capacity in the activities of recruitment, learning and mentoring, in order to enhance technical skills of workers in business innovation field. Finally, the project also plans to lay the foundation for the implementation, after the end of the project, of the new transnational tertiary education curriculum jointly managed by the 3 countries involved (Consortium agreement).

Partners gathered under the coordination of the CCI of Bari to discuss all aspects of future transnational clusters. The clusters were designed to be based on each partner's suggested scheme to be in line with legal framework of their country for what concerns the national registration framework.

The partners defined a cross-border assessment toolkit: this is a very specific document for all partners which defines the framework for cooperation between SMEs and training institutions in the 3 countries, outlining how to define the structure of new curricula, the sets of learning outcomes, assessment, evaluation process, Europass certification etc.

The Lead Partner reports that the Ministry of Education of Montenegro is planning to implement pilot activities in the town of Tuzi, where the education will be provided also in English and Albanian (the town is located next to the border with Albania). The aim is to implement the first educational training once the agreement on the certification process will be reached.

For what concerns the mutual recognition of the three countries' certification process, the initial plan was to organise an official meeting among the three ministries, however due to administrative changes within the Ministries, together with the pandemics, this was not possible. The Lead Partner reports that they are working to identify another way to secure the recognition of the certifications.

In May 2021, the level of achievement of the project output is the following:

Programme output indicator	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial (common indicator – reference to the Annex of Regulation support (EU) No 1299/2013);	Cluster agreement		
	Assessment Toolkit		– about to be finalised
Number of business and research institutions involved/offering nonfinancial support.	SMEs and Training Institutions assessments		
	Consortium agreement		

Territorial differences were mainly due to the different educational target of the countries: while Montenegro decided to concentrate on the training programme per se in order to implement a more country-wide approach, in Albania the focus was rather on university capacities (the Albanian educational partner is in fact a University).

Which factors have hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how is the COVID influencing the project implementation?

The project was harshly affected by structural administrative changes within the Lead Partner. Indeed, following the elections in 2020, Montenegro is undergoing new reforms that will bring to a change of the general law and the Ministry of Education has been joined in the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

The new government settled in December 2020, however at the date of May 2021 the Ministry is still not operational. The entity does not have a legal representative, which prevents the Lead Partner from submitting a request for project extension.

Also, Montenegro recently adopted an instrument of temporary financing, however the budget law has not been approved yet.

Albanian partners incurred in administrative problems too, especially during the development of the qualification framework: the Agency for National Qualification was belonging to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economy. This meant that, when new qualifications were developed, both Ministries had to approve the new curricula, which resulted in a long process. During the project's implementation, the Agency was restructured and its autonomy was increased.

The Lead partner reports that the Albanian partners incurred in delays due to the highly centralised FLC system.

The spread of Covid 19 pandemic, also constitute a factor hampering project implementation. Indeed, the project failed in reaching the target of engaged SMEs, since this latter were in harsh difficulties. Thus, workshops and the tailored events were not and will probably not reachable for some of the partners.

The Lead Partner reports that in Montenegro it was difficult to engage the public sector in the cluster, especially Municipalities, as it was not easy to let them understand the importance of their involvement (on the Italian side, Municipalities are taking part to the cluster, which is a strong advantage for the implementation of the planned activities).

Project results

What are the results achieved by the project?

The project has a tangible impact towards the Axis n. I and Cross-cutting priorities of the Programme, namely with the following achievements:

- Improvement of the skills profile of the workforce to respond to the specific needs of cross-border SMEs in terms of innovation to fight against the economic crisis;
- creation of a networked innovation community able to improve, with a co-responsible approach, the creation of common standards to be adopted in the education systems for developing young highly qualified technicians to favour the real and sustainable competitiveness of cross-border SMEs and for allowing the mobility of technicians at cross-border level as key factor for improving SMEs capacity of internationalization.

The project was extremely innovative, as it created the only transnational 5th EQF training programme in Europe.

Even before the end of the project, some results can already be noticed: in Montenegro an educational institute joined the cluster and, upon their initiative, they developed a curriculum for dual education system in the field of KETs.

The project had a high policy impact in IPA countries already during its second year of implementation. Indeed, in Montenegro, thanks to the project input, the Law book for developing of qualification now has new article which commits institutions in approving and adopting training curricula that are developed under EU initiative. Before this article was inserted, curricula proposed by sector entities (CCIs, association of SMEs or consortium of representatives of SMEs) had to be submitted to the Council for National Qualifications for approval, which makes the process extremely long.

The Lead partner reports that also in Albania there were policy impacts in enhancing the recognition of national qualifications.

Furthermore, the project meets the latest (2020) recommendations issued by the European Commission to Montenegro and Albania.

As for Montenegro, the recommendations related to Chapter 26 (Education and Culture) report that the country has a good level of preparation and that some progress was made after the 2019 recommendations on Vocational Education and Training. However, Montenegro is advised to improve education sector governance and continue with relevant reform measures to improve the overall quality of education; more importantly, the country is advised to establish an adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanism of practical learning at vocational and higher level education, in order to give concrete application to the national VET strategy (2020-2024), adopted in January 2020.

For what concerns Albania, the EC report on Chapter 26 notices that some progress was made concerning VET with the establishment of the National Agency for Employment and Skills, the restructuring of National Agency for Education, Vocational Training and Qualifications, the implementation of the Albanian Qualification Framework Law and in the adoption of the implementing legislation for the VET Law. However, the EC pushes for Albania to finalise the implementing legislation of the VET Law and continue with the optimisation of the

VET system to develop services and competences in line with the needs of the private sector. The report notices that implementation has been confined to pilots and has not yet been applied countrywide: HISTEK is giving its direct contribution in these regards.

The following table indicates the project result indicators and their level of achievement (data retrieved in May 2021):

Programme result indicator	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Common interventions aimed to improve the cross border framework conditions in which the facilitators of competitiveness operate	Number of institutions adopting new and/or improved strategies and action plans	6	6
	Number of institutions applying new and/or improved tools and services	30	n.a.
	Amount of funds leveraged based on project achievements	0	0
	Number of jobs created (FTE) based on project achievements	0	0
	Number of trained Persons	0	0

As for the number of institutions adopting new and/or improved strategies and action plans, 3 National Public bodies and 3 HEIs achieved the target.

As the project is still ongoing, the Lead Partner has not been able to provide data related to the indicator on the achieved number of institutions applying new and/or improved tools and services.

What is the added value of your project?

Following the analysis of project web-survey the main project's added values refer to:

- the promotion and transfer of good practices
- the facilitation of movements of people and goods

With regards the promotion and transfer of good practices, it is worth to underline the role covered by the Italian partner within project partnership. Indeed, through its participation to HISTEK project, Italy could transfer good practices to the IPA countries by spreading its system of business innovation and development already considered as a model of best practice at the European level.

Durability and capitalisation potential

The partners are interested in capitalising the results with another project, however as the project is ongoing this idea has not been discussed in detail. Most results will be visible after the end of the project, as it sets the basis for improving the creation of training programmes: the interviewed partners report that they believe that results will be tangible in the years to come. Indeed, the project has also developed a set of tools that will be made available beyond the project's duration, namely the toolkit and the methodology for SMEs assessment. After the project's closure, SMEs will benefit from technical and operative advises on how to organize, in cooperation with cross-border educational and research institutions, practical learning activities inside SMEs strengthen the links between theory and practice. The toolkit contains Guidelines and Templates on how to integrate theoretical contents into practical context. At the present day (May 2021), the toolkit is about to be finalised and will be uploaded on the website before the end of the project.

Finally, the consortium agreement will be signed by the end of the project: this will secure sustainability to HISTEK's activities and results, as the consortium agreement is legally binding.

The Lead Partner reports that, for what concerns the next programming period, it would be important to include topics that can, both directly and indirectly, cover social inclusion and health.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

One of the main obstacles is the absence of formal recognition of qualifications between Albania and Montenegro (especially regarding diplomas from private training institutions).

In addition, the three countries have different levels of economic development and different economic settings, which made the identification of a common framework more challenging. Montenegrin economy is more focused on the tertiary sector, while Albanian industrial sector is more developed.

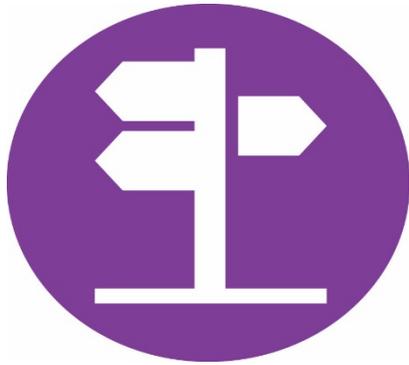
Also, the economic relations between the Italian programme area and Albania are certainly stronger than the relations between Italy and Montenegro.

However, this was partially overcome with the identification of common economic sectors (mainly of the manufacturing sector) which were of primary importance for all the programme area.



Interreg - IPA CBC

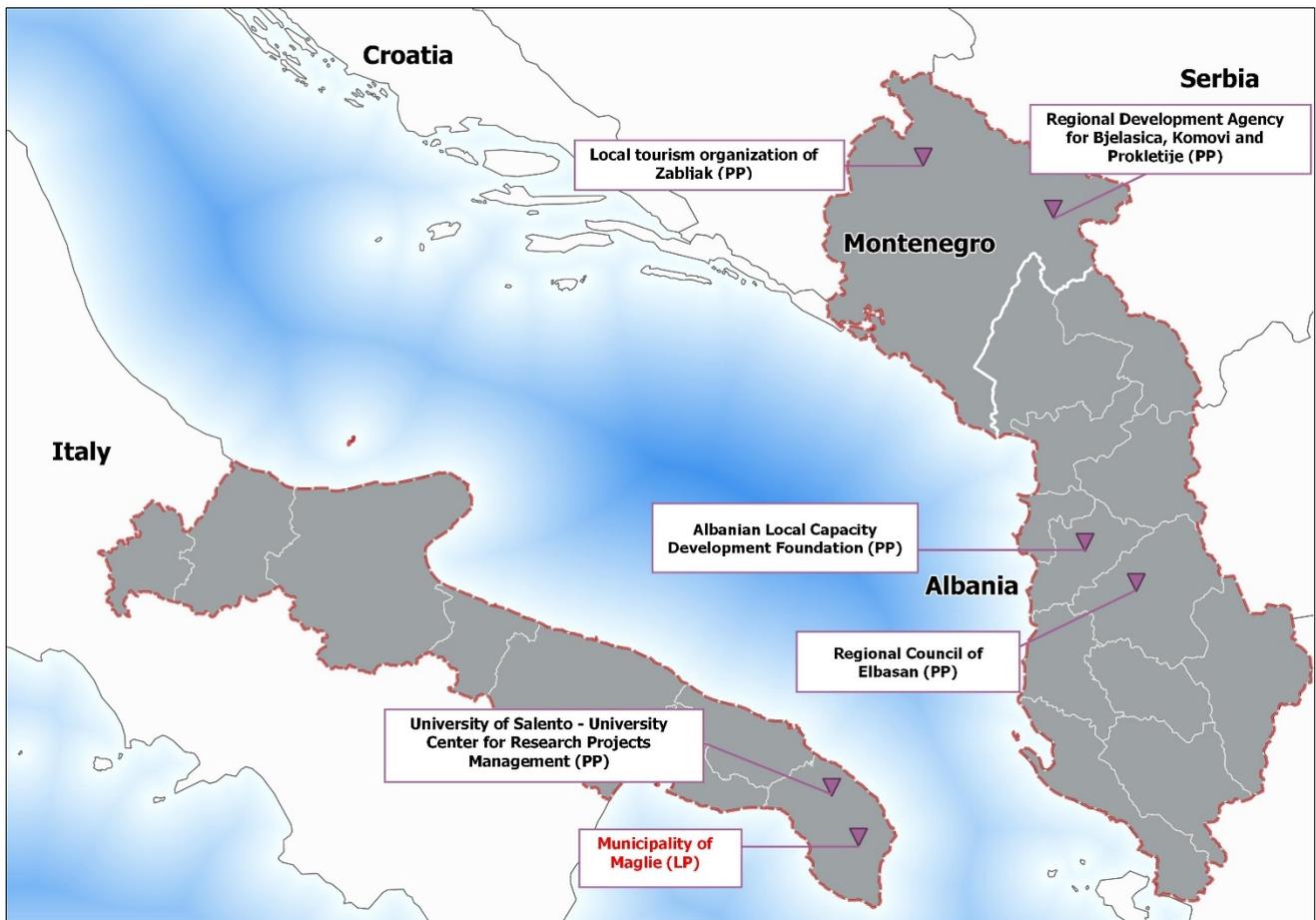
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



wISHfUI

Ict for Smart Healthcare
toUrism

Case study report



The project in a nutshell



wISHfUI project

PRIORITY AXIS 2: TOURISM & CULTURE

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2.1

Boost attractiveness of natural and cultural assets to improve a smart and sustainable economic development



NEEDS ADDRESSED

Lack of differentiated and innovative tourism products and services, difficulties in accessibility

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

Public hospitals, local tourism officer, national and regional authorities, SMEs

PARTNERSHIP

 **6 partners**

 **LEAD PARTNER**
Comune di Maglie

PROJECT OUTPUTS*

-  - products, services, pilots (scheduled)
-  - valorized sites (scheduled)



* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 15.03.2018

Ending date: 30.06.2021

Duration: 39 months and 15 days

Overall budget: | 157 290.00 Euro

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 357 061.10 Euro

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	Municipality of Maglie	ITALY	Maglie (Lecce)	342 900	16 832.57
PP	University of Salento	ITALY	Lecce	266 400	213 587.24
PP	Albanian Local Capacity Development Foundation	ALBANIA	Tirana	126 665	47 608.02
PP	Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania	ALBANIA	Tirana	129 150	22 694.15
PP	Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije	MONTENEGRO	Berane	157 490	51 355.11
PP	Local tourism organization of Zabljak	MONTENEGRO	Zabljak	134 685	22 984.01

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

Wishful's project goal is to increase the capacity of the Programme area to develop a wider touristic offer integrated to medical services, by creating an interconnected system between touristic offer and medical services, enabling people affected by particular diseases to access a wide range of services while enjoying their holidays. Thus, the aim of the project is to reduce barriers preventing people having particular diseases and/or disabilities through innovative tools and solutions.

Wishful's project implementation reflects many challenges and needs identified in the Programme area, mostly referred to the lack of interconnectivity between the three countries/region in the field of tourism and the protection of cultural and natural heritage. The lack of interconnectivity between partners in these fields, depends on several factors (lack of differentiated and innovative tourism products and services; insufficient cooperation networks; difficulties in accessibility; need to improve the attractiveness of natural and cultural assets; seasonal tourism demand Inefficient cross-border territorial synergies; lack of planning instruments for the smart and sustainable cultural and natural heritage).



Source: Project website

Zabljak), 2 Italian partners (University of Salento and the Municipality of Maglie¹⁰) and 2 Albanian partners (the Albanian Local Capacity Development Foundation and the Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania).

The partnership has been structured from already existing networks (e.g. the Albanian Local Capacity Development Foundation (ALCDF), also participated in Interreg IPA Adriatic with one of the two Montenegrin partner, and collaborated in the past with University of Salento and the Municipality of Maglie).

Project partnership was well-structured, except for some communication problems among partners, that in some cases caused some slowdowns.

Project implementation

Project activities are mainly localised in Elbasan (Albania) and in Maglie (Italy).

In Albania, the activities mainly concern the identification of health facilities area of natural, cultural and historical interest in Elbasan, with a particular focus on both their accessibility and the level of touristic attractiveness. What is important for tourists indeed, is to understand that they could benefit from natural and cultural heritage of a territory while being conscious that there are hospitals and care organisations able to provide services they need.

From the Italian side, the project planned the organisation of a cultural event in Maglie, at the end of project activities. This event will focus on the possibility to define historical and cultural routes accessible for all tourists, especially for those affected by critical diseases. In particular, the experience will start from Maglie, in which tourists will identify the main cultural and historical attractions by boosting territorial attractiveness of the town and also giving the possibility to people affected by various diseases to enjoy this sensorial and natural experience. Furthermore, other Italian partner (the University of Salento), has recently presented the ITC

¹⁰The Municipality of Maglie was not available for the case study interview. The evaluator cannot provide further information on this partner for the case-study analysis implementation.

In order to overcome these critical issues, Wishful's purpose is to create a cross-border platform integrating touristic and medical services/products to promote smart and accessible tourism and also the valorisation of the Adriatic-Ionian cultural and natural heritage.

This innovative approach, that includes a smart and innovative management of tourism, will boost both the touristic sector by promoting a more accessible tourism, and adapt the partners involved in the Programme to European standards in the touristic and cultural heritage field.

How was the partnership set up?

The partnership is composed by 2 partners from Montenegro (Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica and the Local tourism organisation of

platform for smart and sustainable tourism during an online technical meeting with all the other partners. This digital tool will serve as a vector for enhancing touristic accessibility and provide a wide range of touristic opportunities for people with chronic patients and particular diseases.

Finally, the Italian partner also held several meetings in order to monitor the project follow-up. These meetings involved all the project partners and were held mainly in Lecce, at the University of Salento.

Project partners discussed and agreed on a standardised approach through which activities have been implemented. Nonetheless, each partner implemented the relevant activities based on their respective territorial specificities.

What output indicator does your project contribute to?

The main project's outputs are:

- 1 target community interested in the services proposed;
- 1 interregional healthcare tourist network;
- 3 Cross Border Touristic routes solutions.

The project selected two programme output indicators: "Number of new products, services and pilot or demonstration project realised" and "Number of valorised sites". In both cases, the project has not yet reached the proposed target.

Programme output indicator	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Number of new products, services and pilot or demonstration projects realized	i. 1 target community interested in the services proposed is created ii. 1 interregional healthcare tourist network iii. 3 Cross Border Touristic routes solutions	5	Not achieved yet
Number of valorised sites	1 historical site valorised/accessible in Maglie	1	Not achieved yet

Which factors has hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how the COVID is influencing the project implementation?

Main factors that negatively affected project implementation refer to certification and reporting procedures (also referring to the use of eMS) and the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As regards project certification and reporting procedures, project implementation has been hampered the correct project implementation. Indeed, according to data included in the eMS platform, the expenditure approved are much lower than the approved budget, especially for some partners. Financial flows issues affected not only Albanian partners but also the project lead partner, Municipality of Maglie. The situation is different as regards the University of Salento, which performed well according to their allocated budget. Some partners also reported problems in dealing with eMS platform (e.g. missing documents, wrong procedures, etc.), especially during the very first stages of project implementation. However, training sessions on financial issues organised by the NIP and the JS revealed to be very helpful to alleviate some of those problems.

Advanced payment represented another criticality, especially for the Albanian partner ALCDF. Indeed, the Albanian partner spent half of its budget to cover project costs, while waiting for their reimbursement.

Also Covid-19 pandemic represented a criticality for project implementation. The spread of the pandemic obliged partners to call for two prolongations in order to complete the defined activities in the work plan. In particular, for the finalisation of the activities initially foreseen partners asked for an extension of the project, firstly to the end of the December 2020 and then to the end of June 2021.

The pandemic postponed the realisation of several project activities. These delays prevented the evaluator in analysing project's achieved outputs. However, according to the analysis of the project progress report referred to the last reporting period (01.07.2020 - 31.12.2020) it seems that project implementation is proceeding.

Project results

The project selected the programme result indicator “Common action Plans for the smart management of tourist destinations to be adopted by the public authorities of the Programme area” The description of the result refers to the increased accessibility for tourists with particular diseases and special needs to cultural and natural programme areas. Through the achievement of this result, the project will not only enhance connectivity among the three countries/region in the field of tourism but will also allow a more integrated system by creating synergies between touristic offer and medical services.

As in the case of project output indicators, since the project faced several delays, no project result has been achieved yet.

Programme specific result indicators	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Common action Plans for the smart management of tourist destinations to be adopted by the public authorities of the Programme area.	Increasing accessibility for tourists with special needs	1	Not achieved yet

Durability and capitalisation potential

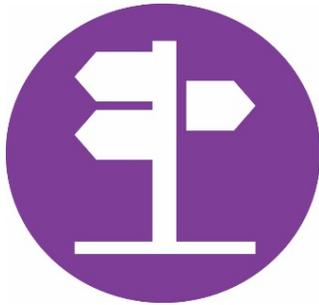
Project durability and capitalisation potential stem from the web platform and Apps realisation integrating touristic offer and medical services. Indeed, these instruments, granting the reduction of a relevant market gap, will be exploited over the time by tourists once the project will be completely implemented.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

Following the analysis of Programme documents and thanks to the information collected during the case study interview, no major CBC obstacle preventing project implementation has been reported.



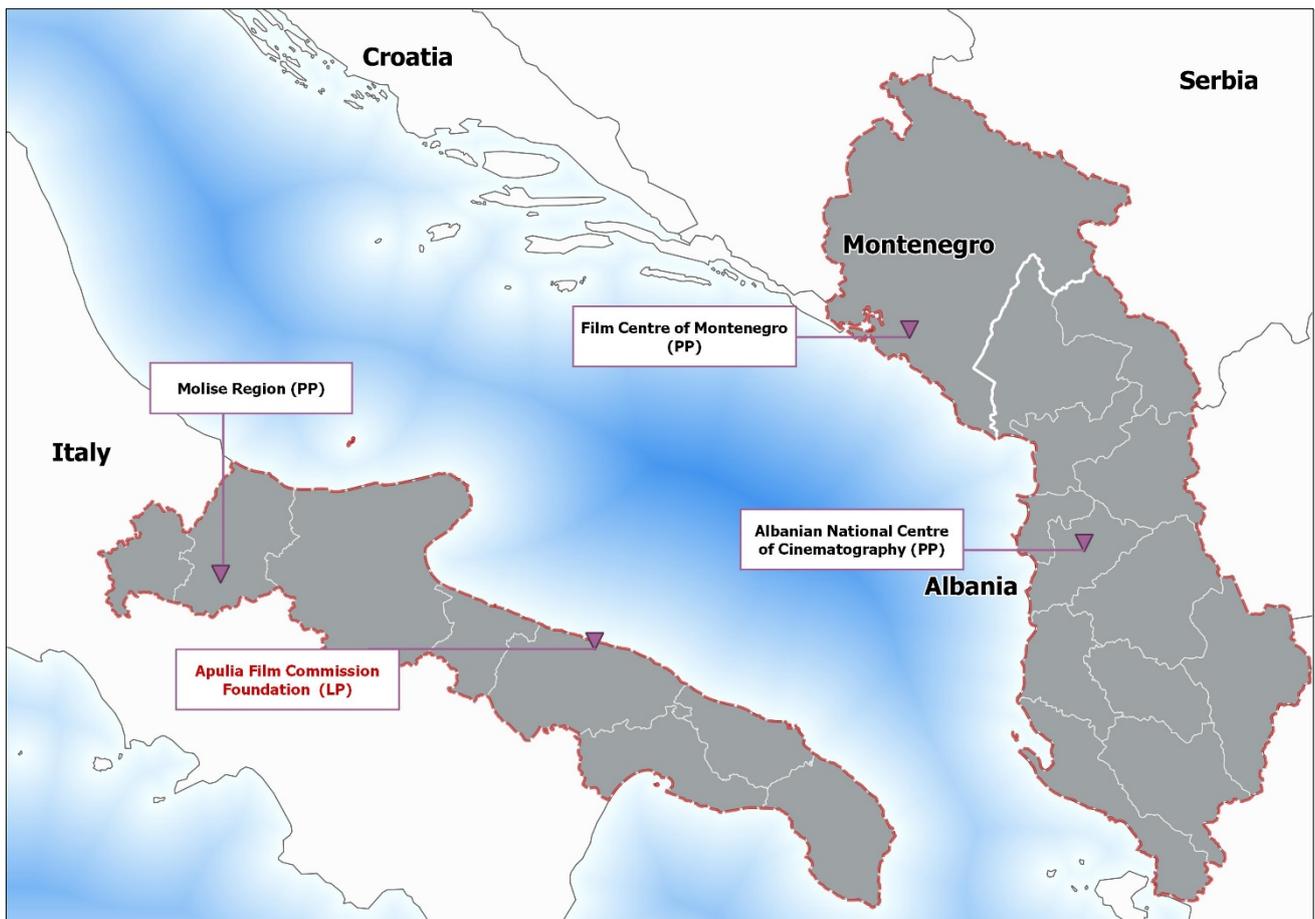
Interreg - IPA CBC
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



CIRCE

Common Initiatives to
pRomote CinEma across Italy –
Albania - Montenegro

Case study report



The project in a nutshell



CIRCE project



PRIORITY AXIS 2: TOURISM & CULTURE

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2.2

Increase the cooperation of the relevant key actors of the area for the delivery of innovative cultural and creative products

Start
April 2018

The project is closed

End
March 2021



NEEDS ADDRESSED

Underdeveloped screen industry, significant gap in Albania and Montenegro

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

Education/traning centers, general public, regional authorities, SMEs, sectoral agency

PARTNERSHIP



4 partners



LEAD PARTNER

Fondazione Apulia Film Commission

PROJECT OUTPUTS*



25 enterprises receiving non-financial support



1 cross-border creative platform

PROJECT BUDGET

EUR
831 540

Contract total

EUR
706 809

of which IPA funds

EUR
124 731

Co-financing

* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 01.04.2018

Ending date: 31.03.2021

Duration: 36 months

Overall budget: 831 540.00 Euro

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 484 408.60 Euro

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	Apulian Film Commission Foundation	ITALY	Bari	407 590	279 033.79
PP	Film Centre of Montenegro	MONTENEGRO	Cetinje	153 000	115 309.13
PP	Qendra Albanian National Centre of Cinematography	ALBANIA	Tirana	182 100	34 235.93
PP	Molise Region	ITALY	Campobasso	88 850	55 829.75

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

Even if it is globally recognised that cultural and creative sectors are key strategic resources to rely on for territorial promotion, digital revolution has threatened the survivor of cinema, creating a significative gap in Albania and Montenegro that need to be filled. By contrast, Apulia Region has invested in recent years important resources into a Creative Cluster aimed at promoting the development of the cultural sectors, focusing on cinema as a resource for mass acculturation and territorial enhancement, by supporting also a process of digitalization.

Project partners gathered under the common objective of valorising the target territories at the audio-visual sector, strengthening relations and increasing collaboration between them and the main stakeholders from the audio-visual sector, such as festival promoters.

The overall objective of the project CIRCE is to improve conditions for the growth of the cultural and creative industries belonging to the audio-visual sector, which can foster the valorisation of cultural heritage in the involved areas, by implementing cross border initiatives able to build a bridge among the involved regions and gather key actors in new creative productions.

The project was born on the impetus of pre-existing relations and willingness to cooperate between Italian and Albanian partners, who in 2013 signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at implementing joint

activities and co-financing common initiatives supporting co-production and distributions of respective audio-visual works produced by the professionals of the two countries.

Specifically, the Lead Partner had the idea of putting in place projects that would meet real needs not only at the local level but also at the regional one. This joined the willingness to experiment together with Albania and Montenegro.

The project is also continuation of cooperation from the previous programming period, built on the results of the project ArTVision (Interreg IPA Adriatic 2007-2013) that was led by Puglia Region and that promoted innovation in interactive and inter-institutional cultural communication among all Adriatic and European countries.

How was the partnership set up?

The partners were already familiar with each other from previous collaboration opportunities, and the partnership was set up with the idea of displaying technical partners: project partners are public sector institutions whose primary role is the development of local and regional policies to foster the development of cultural and audio-visual sector.

Circe includes also 3 associated partners, belonging to the public sector. Indeed, associated partners involved and supporting project implementation are: the Ministry of Culture of Montenegro, the Ministry of Culture Republic of Albania and Ministry of Heritage and Culture and Tourism (MIBACT).

Project implementation

As per Application Form, the project outputs are:

- Joint cross border production platform
- Network of Film Festivals in the cross border Region
- Capacity building for enterprises operating in the audio-visual sector
- Action plan to transfer the Italian tax credit policy to IPA countries.

Among the activities already planned in the project plan, the project developed and produced a cross border Web Series articulated in 9 episodes on the topic of voyage, shot in the three countries. The series was developed by gathering ideas through an international call for under-35 directors, then selected by a Crossborder commission. Also, Circe established two Cineport Hubs in Albania, by equipping two cinema halls owned by the respective Municipalities with the most advanced digitalized technology. An agreement has been already signed between ANCC and Municipality of Vlora & Gjirokastra, without any working cinema since 1990, entrusting cinemas management to ANCC for at least 10 years. On the Montenegrin side, investment will concern the investment for a mobile cinema package to arrange film screenings all around Montenegro, thanks to a high-level

quality projector, accompanied with mobile screen and sound system, which can be easily set up in many outdoor & indoor places. Owner of the investment is FCM that will design an art movie festival to promote local productions and a quality cinema schedule to a wider audience as vector of revival of regional artistic



Source: CIRCE Project, Panel at Podgorica Film Festival

heritage. Finally, the project also foresees the implementation of capacity building actions to enhance skills and competences of operators working in the audio-visual sector to foster the creation of a cross-border community and the development of new creative business model. Moreover, the project intends to strengthen cooperation with sector agencies and regional authorities involved in promoting initiatives to enhance their planning and administrative capacity for the development of creative industries and for promoting locations and local resources.

This activity also foresaw an online training week in the shape of 5 workshops, held in March 2021 where partners involved experts of the Italian Film Industry. This aimed at developing and promoting the local cinema expertise in the international stage as well as transfer the Italian good practices. The event was destined to partners from Albania, Montenegro and Molise but open also to all those interested in the subject.

The activity also plans the creation of a database (production and location guides) for Puglia Region, Molise Region, Albania and Montenegro, listing both audio-visual professionals and enterprises, as well as shooting locations. The database is currently being developed (Montenegro already completed the guide and it is now available in the website www.filminmontenegro.me).

Lastly, this the project displays an action plan to apply tax credit policy to IPA countries (the tax credit is already in place in Italy), which at the present day is currently ongoing and is in form of a draft paper.

What output indicator does your project contribute to?

As the project ended in March 2021, reports and certifications are to be finalised (especially for the Albanian partner).

After interview with the project Lead Partner, in April 2021 the level of achievement of the project outputs was as follows, even if the data are to be validated during the project final report in June 2021.

Programme output indicator	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Small scale investment to improve cinema distribution in Albania	5	1
	Enterprises operating in the audio-visual sector skilled within a cross-border initiative	10	At least 25
Number of cross-border creative platforms.	Joint cross-border production platform	1	1

Which factors has hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how the COVID is influencing the project implementation?

The Covid-19 pandemics allowed to carry out only the kick-off meeting in person, thus all other meetings, trainings, digital labs, workshops had to be carried out online. Moreover there have been even some cancelled events (e.g. presentation of festival, website etc) since they could not be held in person because of restrictions due to the spread of pandemic.

On the other hand, Covid-19 turned out to be also an opportunity as it created the conditions for higher visibility on the web.

The Albanian partner had strong delays on the activities primarily due to the lack of funds.

Albanian partners have difficulties in spending because of the highly centralised system. Albanian public entities do not have their own budget availability: the project contributions are received by the Albanian Ministry of Finance, so before the project partner has cash availability it takes a long and difficult process. Also, the prefinancing cannot be a solution because the beneficiaries cannot spend it, as it is managed at the central level. Along with these cashflow issues, there is also problems related to a slow FLC system, whose consequences are strong delays both in procurement process and project activities implementation.

This can potentially hamper the participation of Albanian partners in future projects, as they might be discarded due to this aspect that can slow down the project activities.

The LP suggests that a partial solution could be the reduction of the length of the reimbursement period. Another solution could be to separate the certification of the expenditures from the progress reports, as it happens in the CBC Italy-Albania programme in which the certification windows are multiple along the year.

The LP brings out the fact that the Programme could adopt the EU regulation 651/2014 that foresees that the audio-visual sector is exempted from the state aid regime. This would allow to create a fund for co-production in the programme area to ensure to scale up the results.

The Montenegrin partner notices that it is difficult to have institutions involved and engaged in the projects, as not always the importance of such projects is understood. Sometimes institutions lack the capacity of properly managing projects and their funds.

Project results

What are the results achieved by the project?

The project results meet the Pillar 4 of the EUSAIR Action Plan, by supporting the fostering of cultural heritage and creative cross border region. Furthermore, the project objectives are also aligned to the EUSAIR Cross Cutting issue “Capacity building”.

The project contains a capacity building action to pave the way to apply the Italian tax incentives policy for cultural and creative industries also in Albania and Montenegro, according to their legislation, in order to allow enterprises working in audio-visual sector to benefit from incentives and increase their job opportunities. The Lead Partner indeed has worked both on the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding and on the preparation of a roadmap.

Based on the interviews, the project strengthened cooperation with sector stakeholders in the programme area and increased the artistic quality of the operators of the audio-visual industry from Montenegro, Albania and Italy.

The project achieved higher collaboration and interconnection of audio-visual sector stakeholders thanks to the network of regional film festivals that will enhance distribution of local art movies.

The interviewees agree on the fact that project results will be seen in the future: for instance, the web series has been developed and will be made available to the public probably not before the end of 2021, due to the fact that festivals require exclusive rights on the audio-visual products that they display. Indeed, the web series will be disseminated and promoted through the network of regional film festivals.

The latest data (May 2021) on the project result indicators are indicated in the table below. However, data need to be validated following all partners’ final report (June 2021).

Programme result indicator	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Cross border networks in the cultural and creative fields	Number of institutions adopting new and/or improved strategies and action plans	7	7
	Number of institutions applying new and/or improved tools and services	2	2
	Amount of funds leveraged based on project achievements	0	0
	Number of jobs created (FTE) based on project achievements	50	50
	Number of trained persons	100	88

As confirmed by the web-survey analysis, the main added values of the project are:

- Transfer and promotion of good practices, such as the tax incentive policy that the project wants to transfer from Italy to Albania and Montenegro.
- The promotion of international networks mainly in cultural and creative fields, also thanks to the activities implemented by the project that suppose the involvement of artists coming from the entire programme area.
- The ability of the project in facing common threats and obstacles, since Circe foresees to fill an important gap in the cinema distribution in IPA regions, allowing many people to have quality screenings and a cinema schedule during the whole year.

Durability and capitalisation potential

The project is concluded but its main results are not visible yet: the project outputs and products just started their life cycle, such as the Web Series which will be disseminated and advertised in film festivals during 2021 and beyond, and the online platforms. Indeed, the website will continue working for another year, also the Film Center Montenegro has its own resources to ensure continuity for the next years, especially for what concerns the mobile film activities.

The project developed instruments and tools to increase visibility to both project products and the sector stakeholders. With these regards, the networks that were developed during the pandemics will help increasing visibility. Also, the results of the capacity building activities directed both to audio-visual sector operators, local and regional administrations will show their effects in the future.

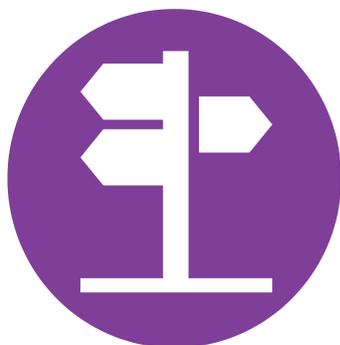
For what concerns the possibility of a new project idea, the partners are willing to work on a follow up on the project, although this possibility has not been discussed in detail. The LP is interested in continuing cooperation with Montenegro, possibly with the Creative Europe Programme (Media), but at the present day it is not clear whether Montenegrin partners will be eligible in the new programming period.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

Following the analysis of Programme documents and thanks to the information collected during the case study interview, no major CBC obstacle preventing project implementation has been reported.



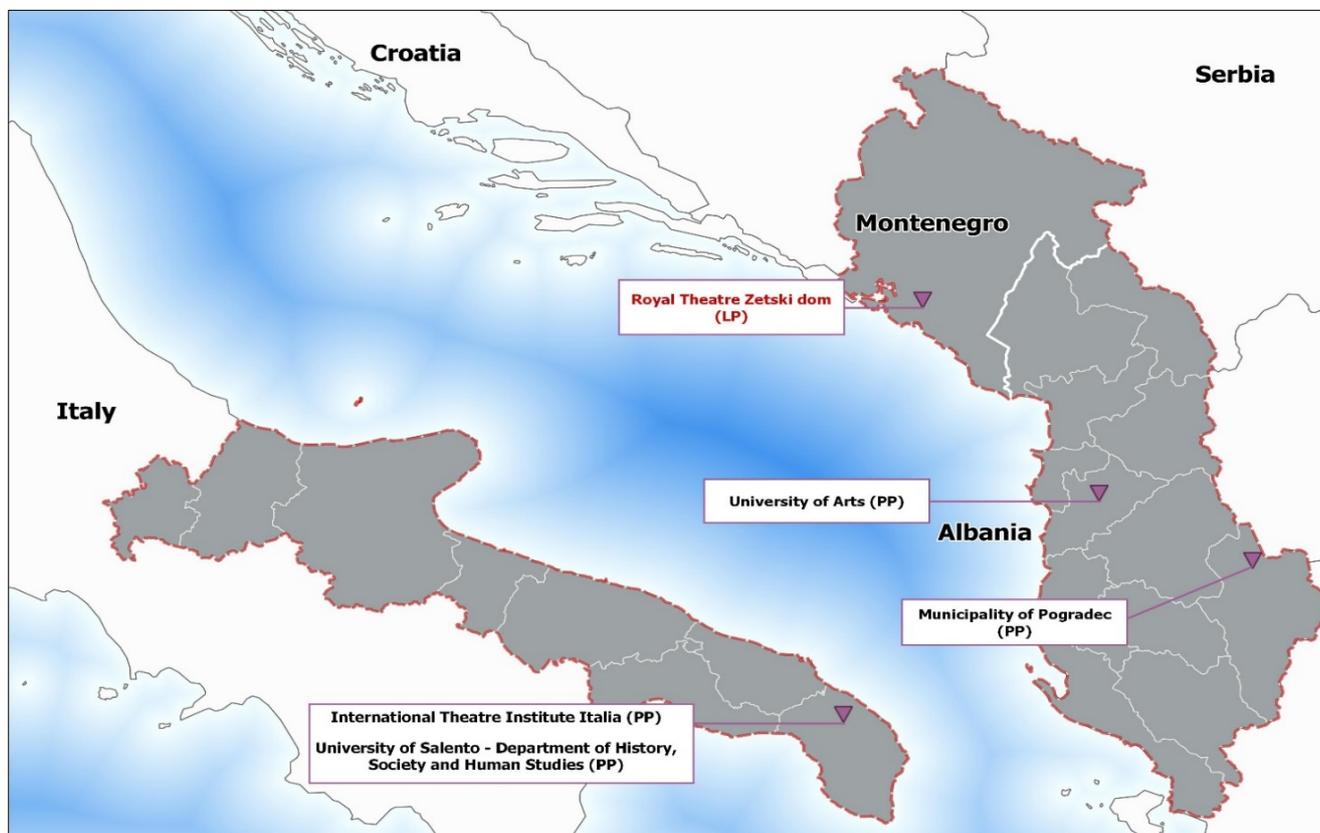
Interreg - IPA CBC
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



ADNICH

ADriatic Network of artistic production for the development and enhancement of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Case study report



The project in a nutshell



ADNICH project

PRIORITY AXIS 2: TOURISM & CULTURE

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2.2

Increase the cooperation of the relevant key actors of the area for the delivery of innovative cultural and creative products



NEEDS ADDRESSED

Underdeveloped integrated territorial marketing strategy for cultural and intangible heritages

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

NGOs, higher education and research, general public, local authorities

PARTNERSHIP

 **5 partners**

 **LEAD PARTNER**
Royal Theatre Zetski dom

PROJECT OUTPUTS*

 **5 cross-border creative platform**

PROJECT BUDGET



* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 03.04.2018

Ending date: 31.03.2021

Duration: 35 months 29 days

Overall budget: 1 041 069.90

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 759 321.60 Euro

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	Royal Theatre Zetski dom	MONTENEGRO	ЦРНА ГОРА (CRNA GORA)	382 682.90	307 132.42
PP	International Theatre Institute	ITALY	Lecce	180 975.00	180 975.00
PP	Qendra Event	ALBANIA	Tirana	149 920.00	29 838.29
PP	University of Arts	ALBANIA	Tirana	158 720.00	72 603.89
PP	University of Salento	ITALY	Lecce	168 772.00	168 772.00

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

Through a well-structured and integrated marketing strategy addressed to a specific audience, the project intends to create a brand to enhance cross-border cooperation between Italy, Montenegro and Albania in the fields of culture and tourism. The project overall objective is to increase the attractiveness of the territorial cultural and natural assets in order to combine a new sustainable touristic offer with medical services and also create new creative products enabling the socioeconomic development in the programme area. The idea behind the project stems from the willingness of the three countries/region to increase the development of intangible assets dealing with cultural heritage, that is a relevant factor to boost the socioeconomic development in the Programme area.

How was the partnership set up?

Project partnership has been structured from an already existing network, previously constituted in the framework of the Creative Europe Programme. Indeed, both the Royal Theatre Zetski dom (Lead Partner) and the International Theatre Institute (Project Partner), participated to many EU funded projects in the afore-

mentioned Programme. It is worth to note the successful collaboration between the two above mentioned partners, that started from the very beginning of the project idea.

The ADNICH project partnership is composed by 5 partners (1 from Montenegro, 2 from Albania and 2 from Italy). The partnership composition has changed during project implementation. Indeed, during the setting up phase, the project faced some difficulties with the Municipality of Pogradec, an Albanian partner involved in the project. Due to a political change within the Municipality, the partner decided to leave the project. The Municipality of Pogradec was replaced by Qendra Event, an NGO operating in the field of event management and organisation.

Project implementation

The ADNICH project has been structured on three different phases:

- 1) The first phase consists in the development of a research-study on the intangible assets of the three Programme areas, with a specific focus on second generation of migrants and gender equality. The study, exploring themes related to migration and most of all the role of women in the three different countries/regions, was mainly conducted by the University of Salento, with a relevant contribution provided by the University of Arts of Tirana. Indeed, through the involvement of researchers, the University of Salento investigated not only on the difficulties faced by migrants in finding a better integration while coming in Italy, but also on gender equality issues underlining the role of women in the different local households. An example of this contribution stems from the study on the *Kuna code*, which is a part of the Albanian customary law affecting the role of women in the households.



Source: Premiere of “Conversation about Love” performed in the Royal Theatre Zetsky dom in Cetinje (Montenegro)

- 2) The second project phase consisted in the realisation of artistic residences, that staged the research topics treated in the previous project phase (migrants and gender equality), Project partners produced many cultural products, especially theatre productions. The cycle of artistic residences involved both



Source: ITI Italia's programme for the Adriatic-Ionian Festival

28 international artists for the choice of the topic to be performed, and the local communities of San Cesario (Apulia Region), Cetinje (Montenegro) and Pogradec (Albania). Artists from different cultures and territories have been involved to enhance cooperation and openness to other cultures.

3) The third step refers to the organisation of a cross-border festival, whose fil rouge were the topics related to second generation of migrants and the role of women in the three countries/region households. The initial idea was to organise in-presence performances, but due to the spread of the pandemic, the Festival was organised through a YouTube Channel.

What output indicator does your project contribute to?

The project selected the indicator “Number of cross-border creative platform created”. The description of the project outputs refers to:

- The creation of International Theatre Institute (ITI) branch in Montenegro; a non-governmental institution which represents a valuable example of public-private partnership in the cultural context.
- The Cycle of Artistic residences in the three countries; involving artists coming from each country/region participating to the Programme. Following the information collected during the case study interviews, partners exceeded the target value, by realising 22 Artistic residences almost 7 per country/region.
- The organisation of the Adriatic-Ionian Festival on Theatre on Intangible Heritage; The Festival aims at two main objectives: 1) on the one hand, the realisation of plays and movies, has represented a tool for enhancing cooperation between cultural and creative artists coming both from the Ionic and Balkan coast; 2) on the other hand, since the first edition of the Festival focused on gender disparities and migration issues, it has been also helpful for increasing the awareness of a broader public attending those cultural and creative activities on these topics.

Based on the table below, the project has successfully reached its project outputs target values.

Programme output indicator	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Number of cross-border creative platform created	i. Creation of ITI branch in Montenegro	5	5
	ii. Cycle of Artistic residences in the 3 countries		
	iii. Adriatic-Ionian Festival of Theatre on Intangible Heritage		

Which factors has hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how the COVID is influencing the project implementation?

The reporting and certification procedures are the most critical issue faced by project partners. In particular, these difficulties regard specifically the Albanian partners.

According to the information collected during the case study interviews, Albanian partners faced many problems in certification of expenditures (e.g. difficulties in opening a dedicated bank account; long decision-making process, delays during the controls, etc...).

Additionally, the withdrawal of Municipality of Pogradec as project partner, poses some questions on the programme procedures effectiveness in such situations. Probably, a better-defined exit strategy would enable the rapid substitution of a project partner.

As for other projects, Covid-19 pandemic has forced the project to modify its plan.

In the case of Montenegro, the spread of Covid-19 pandemic did not affect the implementation of the project activities because partners managed to carry them out previously, except for the final event that has been realised online. The spread of Covid-19 only forced Montenegrin partner to postpone part of the project activities. Indeed, the project got a 3 months extension ensuring the realisation of all planned activities. A second measure adopted to ensure the realisation of project activities, was the shift from in presence to online events, due to governments restrictions preventing travels and displacements.

In the case of Italy, Covid did not affect the realisation of the activities at all. Indeed, the field studies have been conducted before the spreading of the pandemic. As a consequence, the scientific work on cultural heritage was ready before March 2020.

The situation for Albanian partners has been different. Indeed, on the one hand, the Albanian partners managed in organising many workshops while for example the Montenegrin partners were locked down, on the other hand, since they were facing delays in the realisation of some activities, they substituted these activities with interviews, during the minor incidence phase of the pandemic.

Project results

What are the results achieved by the project?

The main project results refer to:

- The cycle of Artistic residences and Theatre festival on Intangible Heritage
- The creation of ITI branch in Montenegro.

The following table shows more in detail the level of achievement towards the targeted projects' results.

Programme specific result indicators	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Cross-border networks in the cultural and creative fields	Cycle of Artistic residences and Theatre festival on Intangible Heritage	4	4
	Creation of ITI branch in MNE	1	1

As shown in the table, ADNICH project reached all the target values. According to the information provided by the beneficiary in the web survey, through the achievement of project results the project aimed at increasing skills and competencies of relevant actors in promoting innovative cultural and creative products. Indeed, the realisation of 3 Cycles of Artistic residences and the organisation of ITheatre festival on Intangible Heritage, represent innovative solutions for boosting the importance of cultural heritage and strengthening the innovation in the field of creative arts.

Additionally, with the creation of an ITI branch in Montenegro, the project also achieved the target result referred to the Programme result indicator “Cross-border agreements in the cultural and creative fields”.

What is the added value of your project?

Following the Programme document analysis and the results of the web survey, ADNICH added value refers to:

- achieve common European objectives
- transfer good practices
- promotes international networks

As regards the promotion of international networks, ADNICH is perceived as a large-scale project, involving different partners coming from different European regions, thus boosting the creation of international network. Nevertheless, although project implementation provided the involvement of many international actors and technicians, the international exchange was not quite possible during the last year due to Coronavirus restrictions.

Durability and capitalisation potential

Project durability and capitalisation potential is due to the artistic and theatrical material realised during its implementation. As an example, both the audio-visual and photographic material created in the framework of Adriatic-Ionian Festival, are available for the public in order to increase its awareness on migration and gender equality issues. The content of this audio-visual and photographic material refers mainly to moments of integration among second generation of migrants, international artists and local communities.

It can be observed the permanent artistic residence realised in San Cesario (Lecce), that also contributes to grant project durability and capitalisation potential. This artistic residence, built out of the ashes of the old “De Giorgi” distillery in San Cesario, serves as a cultural incubator, involving not only artists but also the local community of San Cesario, thanks to a participative approach.

Furthermore, project results and most of all the scientific research realised by the University of Salento, have been capitalised and keep on being used in several academic activities, such as master’s degree courses.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

Following the analysis of Programme documents and through the interviews conducted by the evaluator, it can be observed some emerging obstacles related to geographical dimension. Perceived obstacles refer to the sub-optimal developed transport infrastructure, preventing and mining interconnection among partners. Indeed, it was difficult for example for a partner to travel across Montenegro and Lecce, not only because of Coronavirus restrictions, but also due to a lack of developed transport infrastructures connecting both sides of the Programme area.



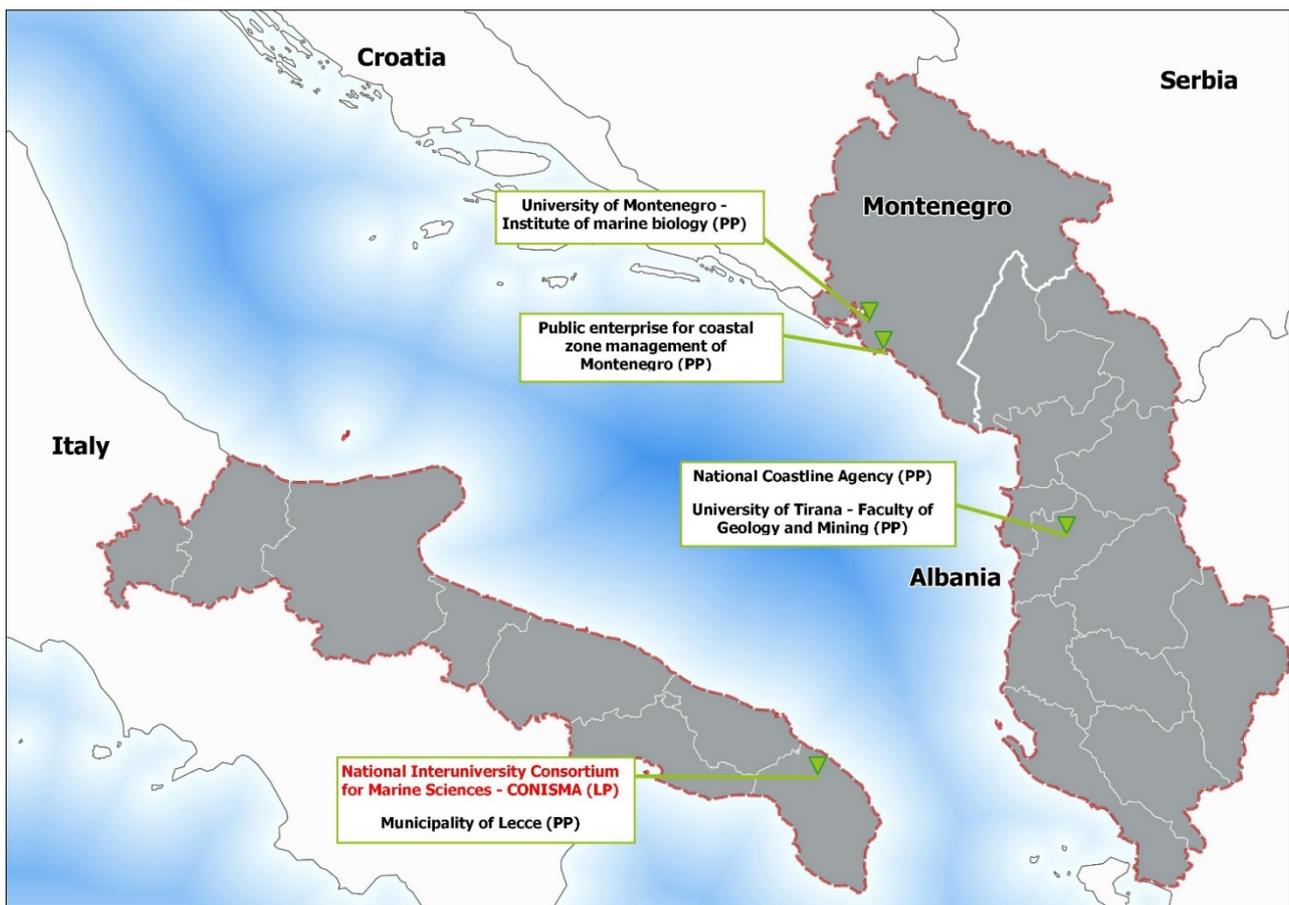
Interreg - IPA CBC
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



WELCOME

WatEr LandsCapes
sustainability thrOugh reuse
of Marine littEr

Case study report



The project in a nutshell



WELCOME project



PRIORITY AXIS 3: ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3.1

Increase cross border cooperation strategies on water landscapes

Start
April 2018

The project is closed

End
February 2021



NEEDS ADDRESSED

Cross border challenges concerning marine litter management and coastal dune consolidation

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

Public authorities (local, regional and national)
Higher education institutions, general public

PARTNERSHIP



6 partners



LEAD PARTNER
National Interuniversity Consortium for Marine Sciences

PROJECT OUTPUTS *



96 pilots



6 users involved

PROJECT BUDGET

EUR
909 249

Contract total

EUR
772 862

of which IPA funds

EUR
136 387

Co-financing

* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 03.04.2018

Ending date: 28.02.2021

Duration: 34 months 26 days

Overall budget: 909 249.32 Euro

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 664 429.72 Euro

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	National Interuniversity Consortium for Marine Sciences (CONISMA)	ITALY	Lecce	268 991.86	250 095.42
pp	Municipality of Lecce	ITALY	Lecce	123 229.15	61 189.30
pp	University of Tirana	ALBANIA	Tirana	154 357.53	89 548.83
pp	Public enterprise for coastal zone management of Montenegro	MONTENEGRO	Budva	128 648.78	110 733.59
pp	University of Montenegro	MONTENEGRO	Kotor	112 658.40	108 318.03
pp	National Coastline Agency	ALBANIA	Tirana	121 363.60	44 544.55

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

The main overall objective of the WELCOME project is to support the long-term marine litter management through the development of guidelines, the testing of a soft method for coastal dune consolidation using wood marine litter and the increase of public awareness on sustainable development. Marine litter is a common problem for the whole Mediterranean Sea. In particular, due to the Adriatic water circulation pattern, marine litter (ML) is continuously travelling from Albania, to Montenegro, to Italy and back again.

Marine litter is mainly composed of plastics, but also of wood, metal, glass and other materials, which can float in large quantities and then settle on the seabed or on the coasts representing an environmental problem on a global scale.

The WELCOME project was created with the aim of addressing two common problems of the Adriatic coasts and the IPA countries, creating good practices in the management and prevention of marine pollution and reducing the erosion of coastal dunes with the use of natural materials. Specifically, the project intends to

develop a soft method based on an art-driven reuse of wood marine litter to make anti-erosion coastal systems in a sustainable, circular economy-based approach.

How was the partnership set up?

The WELCOME project engages 3 competent research institutions (CONISMA, the University of Tirana, the University of Montenegro) and 3 experienced public authorities (Municipality of Lecce, the Albanian National Coastline Agency and the Public enterprise for coastal zone management of Montenegro).

The project lead partner, CONISMA, is a consortium of 34 Italian Universities which coordinates research and scientific activities in the field of Marine Sciences. In the project activities, CONISMA is supported from the scientific point of view by the University of Salento.

Thanks to the long-standing experience of CONISMA in EU funded projects, the partnership of the WELCOME project has been created without difficulties. Indeed, CONISMA had already collaborated in the past with the University of Montenegro and, additionally, relied on a well-established network of partners to look for partners with specific skills (e.g. Euromarine network).

The project also involves the major stakeholders, including local public administrations, owners of bathing establishments, fishery cooperatives, diving centres, marinas managers, voluntary groups and environmental organizations. Additionally, WELCOME increased the public awareness on marine litter topics as well as on sustainable development also applied to tourism through dissemination events for students, citizens and public administrations.

Project implementation

Project activities encompass: i) research on marine litter (including modelling) and marine litter removal from selected Italian, Albanian and Montenegrin beaches, ii) dune restoration, according to a well-defined methodology, iii) drafting of a marine litter plan in the frame of and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

Interventions are mainly localised in the following areas: i) Italy - Municipality of Lecce coastline, including the beaches between the marinas of Torre Rinalda, Siaggiabella, Torre Chianca, Frigole and San Cataldo, ii) Albania - Velipoja area, Kepi i Rodonit, Lalzi Bay and Durresi Bay and iii) Montenegro - Ulcinj Area, in the south-eastern part of the Montenegro coast.

The project is structured in 4 work packages:

The first one mainly concerns beach cleaning activities using practices that do not impact on the environment. Cleaning activities were carried out every 3 months, always with the same parameters and the same methods in the different portions of the selected beaches. The collected waste was then selected, weighed, and catalogued by type. Although the different sanded dunes of each countries have some specificities to be respected, the project developed a common protocol to monitor marine litter. In Montenegro well-known protocols to monitor marine litter already existed, while, for the Albanian partners, these practices revealed to be very innovative.

The project also prepared a scientific paper, that summarises all the data collected and also suggests some measures that could be implemented, especially in Albania and Montenegro, to further protect the marine ecosystems.



Source: WELCOME project, University of Montenegro (Field activities)

The second work package focused on analysis and research activities. Project partners analysed the Adriatic Sea currents in order to gather information on the routes of marine litter.

Furthermore, a portion of the marine litter collected during the beach cleaning activities (in particular wood, residues of *Poseidonia* and other algae) has been re-used to create architectural / artistic installations to be placed at the foot of the dune to block beach erosion. These installations should have taken place in all three countries, even if Albania did not complete the actual installation. The installations have been completed

both in Italy and in Montenegro, despite various delays due to bureaucratic procedures.



Source: WELCOME project, University of Montenegro (Lesson in elementary school "Veljko Drobniaković" in Risan-Kotor)

Lastly, the project carried out various dissemination activities. Awareness-raising activities were carried out in schools, with the aim of raising the awareness of young people and children on these issues. The project organised recycling lessons at schools, especially in those located in coastal municipalities. The activities involved all school levels, from childhood to high school, mainly elementary and middle schools.

What output indicator does your project contribute to?

Project main outputs refer to:

- 1) development of a cross-border marine litter plan in the frame of Integrated Coastal Zone Management ¹¹ to enhance and safeguard cross-border water landscapes.
- 2) launch of pilot projects on Italian, Albanian and Montenegrin coasts to demonstrate the artistic reuse of marine litter to develop anti-erosion defence systems.

According to the information collected during the case study interviews, the two selected programme output indicators reached their target value.

Programme output indicator	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Products and services, pilot and demonstration projects	Beach cleaning operations (54)	63	96
	Restored Dunes (6)		
Number of users involved (in pilot or demonstration projects).		6	6

Indeed, as regards the indicator "Products and services, pilot and demonstration projects", the project achieved a value of 96 on a target of 63. These refers, in particular, to the beach cleaning operations and the activities related to the dunes restoration.

¹¹ <https://paprac.org/iczm-protocol>

On the contrary, the LP faced some difficulties in providing a value for the indicator “Number of users involved (in pilot or demonstration projects)”. Indeed, the value foreseen in the project application form (6) was initially referred to the “users” of the “Cross-border Marine Litter (ML) management plan and legal framework for the ML issue”. In this case, they considered the “users” as the project partners (thus, the value of 6). While, if considering the number of users involved in the project activities (on a larger perspective) the indicator could reach a value of over 5000 units (e.g. Number of trained persons 2971, participants at project events 1895, general public about 600, higher education and research 18, education/training centres and schools 38, interest groups including NGOs 28).

Which factors has hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how the COVID is influencing the project implementation?

One of the main factors that hampered project implementation was related to the reporting and certification procedures. These criticalities are particularly evident for the Albanian partners, for which reporting and certification procedures faced some delays in.

Conversely, with regard to the Montenegrin partners, the reporting and certification procedures worked very well.

Also Covid -19 represented a major risk for the project implementation. However, despite some delays, the project was able to deliver the foreseen activities.

Project results

What are the results achieved by the project?

Based on the answers provided with the web-survey by the LP, the project created better cooperative conditions among the authorities implementing water strategies in the area. Additionally, the project increased awareness on environmentally friendly practices and sustainable development.

The table below shows the target and achieved value of the result indicator selected by the project.

Programme result indicator	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Common Plans enhancing and safeguarding water landscapes (including marine ones).	Common marine litter management plan	1	1

According to the information collected during the case study interview, the result indicator selected by the project “Common Plans enhancing and safeguarding water landscapes (including marine ones)” reached its target value. However, it is worth noting that in order to design a common management plan, the project would had involved not only the administrative bodies of the programme area but also those outside of the programme area, interested by the marine litter issue. Clearly this could not have been achievable for a project such as WELCOME, with limited resources and geographical coverage.

Nonetheless, the project has provided guidelines for the proper management of marine areas.

What is the added value of your project?

Based on the project application form, the project:

- promotes and transfer good practices,
- allows to face common threats and obstacles,

- promotes international networking.

Indeed, WELCOME created a valid background for future research and monitoring activities, especially in the two IPA countries. Thanks to the project, the University of Montenegro prepared, in 2020, an initial report on the state of the marine ecosystem in the country. This represents a very important unforeseen and additional result since such kind of analysis was not available before the project. More specifically, the project allows the University of Montenegro to implement some monitoring activities that were supposed to be carried out by the Montenegrin government in order to comply with the EU Marine Framework Directory (clearly, it is worth noting that, since Montenegro is not an EU member State, it was not mandatory to comply with the regulation, although this represents a great added value). Indeed, in 2019, the University of Montenegro started a complex activity of desk analysis of all legal documents related to marine litter in country. Unfortunately, in that period there was no law for marine litter in Montenegro and no national legislation contains the term “marine litter”. Thanks to the project, at the beginning of 2020, the country harmonised its national law with the EU Marine Framework Directory.

Furthermore, during the last years, the University of Montenegro prepared a country estimation of good environmental status of the marine ecosystem. According to the analysis performed, the threshold value indicating the good status of marine ecosystem should not exceed the value of 20 and in Montenegro, the analysis provided a value of 600. Thanks to these analyses, the Ministry responsible for environment decided to create a national monitoring committee of marine ecosystem that will become operational in the next months.

Durability and capitalisation potential

Project partners capitalised the experience of the project. For instance, CONISMA, the LP, is already participating in other similar projects in the cooperation area (e.g. the Seaviews project, funded under the ADRION programme, which represents an advanced attempt to put together automatic pollution monitoring stations also in addition to the concept of marine litter). However, from the case study interview emerged that there is a certain risk of proliferation of initiatives, which often overlap, in the same programme area, in the same topic. This is a consequence of the Interreg regulation, that beneficiaries suggest to improve. For example, there is a proliferation of marine litter tracing apps, that have been implemented over the years. In order to capitalise and improve the work already done by others EU funded projects, it would be envisaged to have, for instance, one single shared tool. Unfortunately, the Interreg rules do not allow, for example, a project like WELCOME to use part of the Interreg budget to improve or expand an application created with the funds of another project.

As regards, the durability of the project results, the project elaborated a scientific paper that summarises all the data collected and suggests measures to improve marine ecosystem. The recommendations included in the paper could be used, especially in AL and MT, to further protect the marine ecosystems. Clearly, especially for IPA countries, to further develop monitoring activities, it is essential to rely on international funding instruments, but, especially for the case of Montenegro, the government is trying to implement beach monitoring activities with its own funds. The partnership relation will remain over the time and some project partners already expressed their willingness to collaborate in the future for similar initiatives.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

According to the analysis of project documents and through the interviews with the project partners conducted by the evaluator, it can be observed a specific obstacle emerging from the geographical dimension of the border. More specifically, project partners referred of difficulties related to under-developed transport infrastructures and transport services, that make connections between Italy and Montenegro particularly difficult.



Interreg - IPA CBC

Italy - Albania - Montenegro



REEHUB

Regional Energy Efficiency HUB

Case study report



The project in a nutshell



REEHUB project



PRIORITY AXIS 3: ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3.2

Promoting innovative practices and tools to reduce carbon emission and to improve energy efficiency in public sector

Start

April 2018

The project is closed

End

September 2020



NEEDS ADDRESSED

Underdeveloped energy efficiency measures, low performance of energy in buildings

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

infrastructure and (public) service provider, SMEs, Public authorities (local, regional and national)

PARTNERSHIP



6 partners



LEAD PARTNER

Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, Albania

PROJECT OUTPUTS*



30 pilots, services, products, demonstration projects

PROJECT BUDGET

EUR

744 800

Contract total

EUR

633 080

of which IPA funds

EUR

111 720

Co-financing

* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 15.03.2018

Ending date: 13.09.2020

Duration: 30 months

Overall budget: 744 800.00 EUR

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 642 075.75 EUR

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy	ALBANIA	Tirana	141 900.00	47 564.59
PP	Barleti Institute for Research and Development	ALBANIA	Tirana	160 900	158 397.29
PP	ENEA - Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development	ITALY	Brindisi	190 000	190 000
PP	National Energy Technological Cluster Scarl	ITALY	Brindisi	76 000	70 113.87
PP	Municipality of Agnone	ITALY	Agnone	76 000	76 000
PP	University of Montenegro	MONTENEGRO	Podgorica	100 000	100 000

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

The project was created to address the issue of energy demand and energy saving in public buildings, which represents a big challenge for Albania and Montenegro, Molise and Apulia regions. With the exception of buildings constructed in the last decade, Albanian and Montenegro's buildings have no insulation.

In IPA countries, the project wants also to serve as a leverage to achieve the ambitious targets on the performance of energy in buildings set for Albania and Montenegro for EU integration.

For what concerns Puglia and Molise, the two regions have high electricity production but there is a lack of skills and knowledges in public local administration and in designers on best practices to carry out energy efficiency restoration taking into account local climatic factors and technologies adapted to the Mediterranean social, cultural and geographical context and to the specific typologies of users.

The main objective of REEHUB is to create a network of Hubs located in public buildings in each region involved for the organisation of capacity building actions (main output) and the collection of educational and training materials for energy efficiency audit in the building sector. The Hub is meant to serve as a reference

point, connecting experiences with similar backgrounds (Mediterranean) as an “agora” where local policy makers can have open dialogues with building material industries, designers and green SMEs for the implementation of local energy plans.

The second objective is to implement a methodology of audit, according to EU standard (EN 16247-1 and 2), fitted to building renovation that pave the way for new solutions for passive houses in Mediterranean climates.

The REEHUB audit approach aims to reduce the lack of knowledge in measures methodologies, conduct inspections and ensure compliance, and is planned to be transferred thanks to multi-level capacity building programme. Also, the approach gives specific attention to new material according to circular economy principles. The ambitious result of REEHUB is to shift from old buildings to low-energy or zero-energy buildings by supporting public administrations through ad-hoc workshops to ensure the transfer of knowledge and best practices.

How was the partnership set up?

Project partners had a pre-existing network, especially the Italian partners which were already connected through previous joint activities (the project was indeed born under the impulse of ENEA).

Also, the project builds on the contacts and the results developed by the strategic project Alterenergy - Energy Sustainability for Adriatic Small Communities, funded by the IPA Adriatic Programme (2007-2013), in which the Municipality of Agnone was one of the pilot areas of the activities.

The partnership displays scientific partners in each country (Barleti Institute for Research and Development, University of Montenegro and ENEA), while also presenting an institutional component (Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania) and partners in charge for networking and pilot activities (Municipality of Agnone and DiTNE).

The project partnership was set up with a majority of public entities, however the participation of the private sector is ensured through DiTNE, a cluster of public and private entities which connects and promotes interaction between academia, private and public organizations.

The project also includes associated partners, two from Albania coming both from private (Albania Power Corporation) and public sector (Marin Barleti University); three from Italy, namely: ANCE Brindisi (National Association of Construction), Regional Agency for Technology and Innovation located in Bari and the Municipality of Campobasso (Italy).

Project implementation

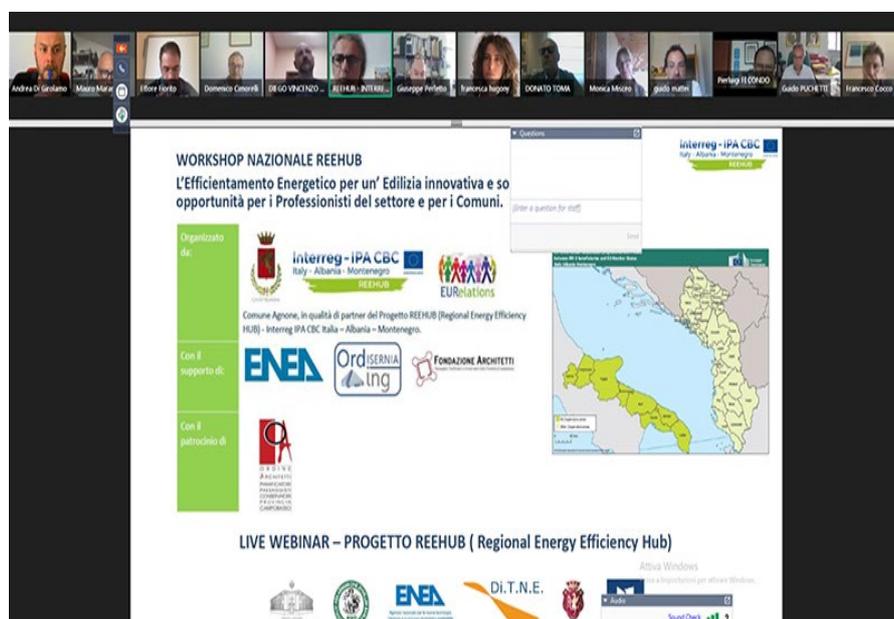
As per AF, project outputs are:

- Best practices of REEHUB Audit Methodology
- Capacity building actions for energy efficiency in buildings
- Roadshow for key stakeholders
- Set up of 4 Regional Energy Efficiency Hubs in the Programme area

The project enabled the set-up of 4 regional hubs (Tirana, Brindisi, Agnone, Podgorica) aimed at developing and disseminating materials, information, capacity building and training materials for architects, engineers but also to a broad set of audience that is interested in energy efficiency.

The partner ENEA developed a simplified methodological tool enabling public authorities to develop report for energy audit of different public buildings.

Public awareness events and training courses were organised for different target groups (municipalities, agencies' administrative officers, architects, engineers, school pupils). Each country carried out an online workshop in which the project and the methodology were presented.



Source: REEHUB Project, Online Workshop on Energy Efficiency:

The project is divided into 6 WP. Apart from the WP Management and WP Communication, the project has 4 Technical WPs aimed at respectively: defining the Energy Efficiency HUB's main requirements and characteristics in the public local venues identified in the project, to be collected in the report on "Best practices for Public Local Administration"; organising and delivering Workshops for improving capacity building of energy efficiency in public buildings. Workshops were organised tailor to the different target group in each region: Molise

organized technical workshop to public administration and to public and private technicians; Albania to energy companies and SMEs that work in building and real estate sector and PA; Montenegro to academic world; organising public awareness and capitalisation by means of information, technical dissemination and practical education (road shows), that can ensure added value of energy efficiency solutions and make tangible results in all WPs; setting up the 4 HUBs (Tirana, Brindisi, Agnone, Podgorica) .

On April 2021, at the end of case study interviews, all output were achieved, as illustrated in the table below.

Programme output indicator	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Number of new products, services, pilot and demonstration projects realized	Best practices of REEHUB Audit Methodology	1	1
	Workshop in each country	3	3
	Road show for key stakeholders	3	22
	REEHUB set up	4	4

Which factors have hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how the COVID is influencing the project implementation?

Covid affected the last stage of the project, as the training activities had to be conducted online and it was not possible to show the tools (for auditing and testing) in person. However, this also allowed more people to attend the online trainings.

However, despite the Covid situation, all outputs and deliverables were achieved even if in some cases they were delayed. Indeed, the activities were smoothly carried out thanks to a very successful collaboration with partners. Also, pre-existing contacts and close relations among the Italian partners (especially those based in Brindisi) and other local public stakeholders helped a lot in facilitating activities.

Some difficulties initially arose because for some partners it was the first Interreg project (e.g. Montenegrin partner) and it was the first time MEI was acting as LP. There were problems for the Municipality of Agnone due to the turnover of project managers inside the administration and to the political turnover, but they received strong support by the other Italian partners and managed to implement all activities, including the meetings and the final workshop. Once the Municipality identified an external consultant the problem was solved.

Furthermore, there were consistent problems in the proposal submission phase: the system was not solid enough to allow multiple users at the same time (e.g. when the deadline was approaching). However, problems were solved at a later stage during project implementation, but also at the beginning of the project there were issues with the platform. Also, interviewees reported that the JS officer was extremely helpful to solve problems and was flexible to the needed extent during the pandemics.

For what concerns the Albanian Lead Partner, one of the main problems was the cash flow: the LP reported that the time between the delivery of the joint progress reports and the reimbursement was too long, sometimes even one year. Even if the Albanian Ministry had already contributed with its 15%, it was not possible to receive money from the Ministry to go further with the activities before the expenses were reimbursed. This caused major difficulties to proceed with payments and with the procurement of expertise.

The Lead partner reports that this was not a problem under an Interreg Greece-Albania project in which the Ministry was partner (the expenses were reimbursed after 3 months from the progress report). This problem is common to all Albanian public entities.

In these regards, the interviewed partner reports that for some internal reason and organisational structure, the LP was not able to smoothly transfer the money to the partners, even after this was certified and received.

The partner from Montenegro could rely on the revolving fund, enabling this partner to solve the cash flow issue. Thus, the Montenegrin partner was affected by this problem only in a lesser manner.

Apart from the cashflow, there were no particular criticalities hampering project implementation.

Project results

The project created a transnational network of HUBs for the implementation of energy efficiency plans that can be discussed and explained with the local community.

The project also created, tested and applied an audit methodology for each location that takes into account local climatic factors and technologies.

The table below shows the target and achieved value of the result indicator selected by the project.

Programme result indicator	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Common plans for energy efficiency and sustainable energy production	Number of institutions adopting new and/or improved strategies and action plans	4	7
	Number of institutions applying new and/or improved tools and services	2	7
	Amount of funds leveraged based on project achievements	0	0
	Number of jobs created (FTE) based on project achievements	1	0
	Number of trained persons	50	117

According to the information collected during the case study interviews, the result indicators generally achieved their target and, in some cases, exceeded it. For what concerns the indicator on FTE, this was inserted with the aim of creating a technical energy auditor expert in improving energy efficiency in Public Building, however this was eventually not finalised under the influence of Covid-19 pandemics.

The results were the same for each country and were equally achieved. Each partner had a different specific target (MEI: public administration; ENEA: students; University of Montenegro: engineers and architects).

The project had strong impact also in remote areas: the Municipality of Agnone managed to successfully implement the activities and the webinars and trainings had high local participation and high interest from the public and from the sectorial associations.

What is the added value of your project?

The project, which is the only one approved under the SO 3.2 of the first call, clearly and directly contributes to the programme objectives. Indeed, a follow-up project REEHUB+ was indeed recently approved under the same programme as a demonstration of its relevance to the programme objectives.

Following the web-survey analysis, the main added value of the project consists in the:

- Promotion and transfer of good practices
- Promotion of international network.

As regards the promotion and transfer of good practices, it is worth to mention the role that Italy covered in the partnership as a partner. Indeed, being Italy rather advanced in this field, its contribution was extremely valuable in bridging the gap with Albania and Montenegro and contributed to the adoption of new policies addressing the nZEB directive¹² for the improvement of energy efficiency in public buildings and to the adoption of new law for energy efficiency.

¹² Nearly zero-energy buildings Directive 2010/31/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, aims at promoting the use of energy from renewable sources in buildings, in order to lower their consumption and the amount of energy produced. This will increase the level of energy performance of both public and private buildings.

Albania is currently applying (January 2021) the new regulations for energy efficiency and the project went in this direction. With the new regulation, the Ministry will identify the typology of buildings that will be the target of interventions. REEHUB set the basis for this kind of interventions in the field and highly contributed to the policy level and to the EU integration process (EU recommendations on chapter 15 of the acquis requiring that Albania increases efforts in energy efficiency for buildings also from a legislative point of view).

IPA countries require higher training and capacity building for what concerns energy efficiency and REEHUB went towards this direction.

Durability and capitalisation potential

Project results will be capitalised and replicated under its follow-up project REEHUB PLUS, which started in November 2020 and was approved under the same Programme (targeted call) with the aim of giving sustainability to the Hubs, that present most of the partnership from REEHUB.

The hope is that REEHUB PLUS will be able to conduct trainings in person (which was not possible in the last stage of REEHUB because of the covid situation) and to work on new case studies.

There is willingness to apply for funding under different calls to implement the activities that were identified under REEHUB, such as energy efficiency infrastructures for public schools or similar actions that were identified as a priority under the project. Furthermore, MEI is already collaborating with ENEA under other projects that also involve the new-born Albanian Agency for Energy Efficiency, specifically for the training activities of its staff.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

Cultural differences did not affect the project activities. Particularly, the fact that Italian language is extremely widespread in Albania facilitated many activities between Albanian and Italian partners.

As for administrative obstacles, interviewees believe that these were mostly related to different governance levels among partners.



Interreg - IPA CBC

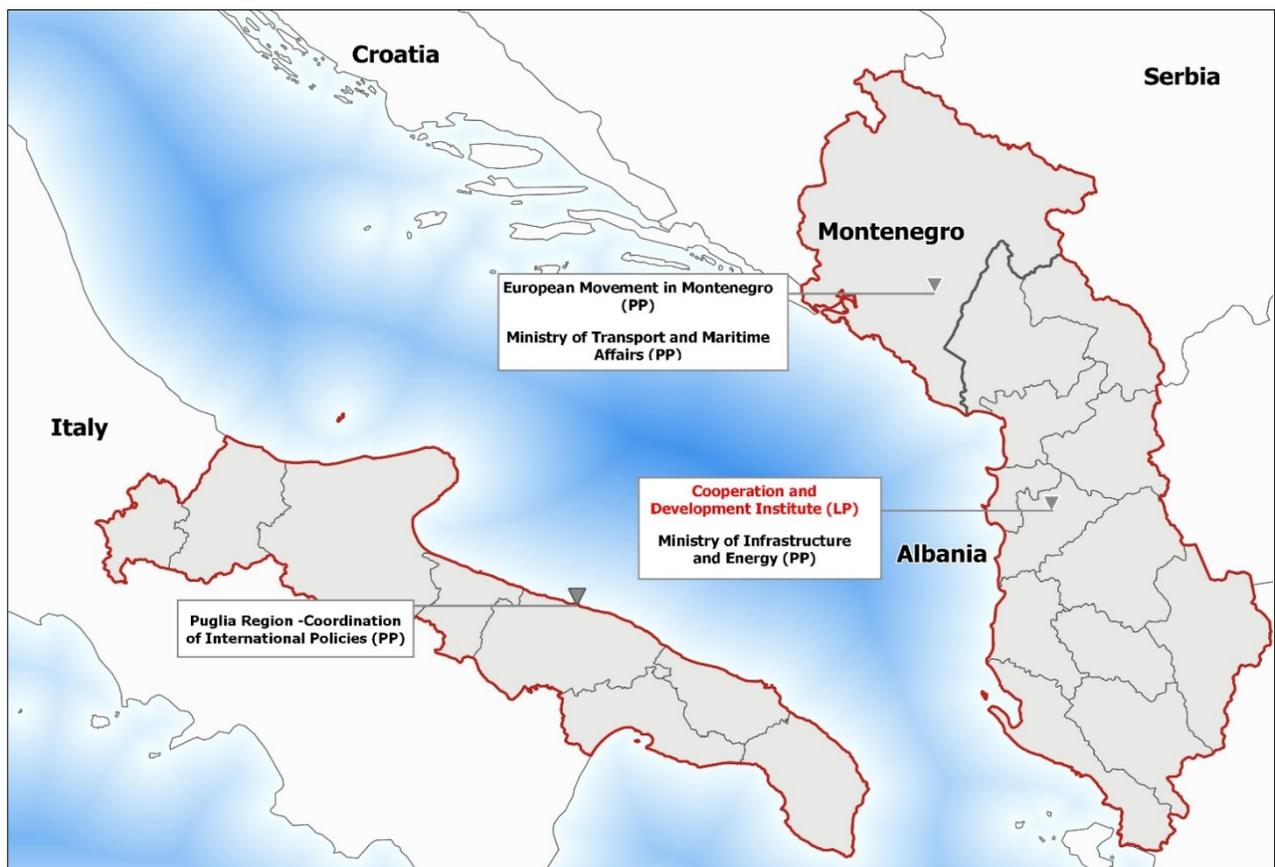
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



SAGOV

South-Adriatic connectivity Governance

Case study report



The project in a nutshell



SAGOV project



PRIORITY AXIS 4: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4.1

Increase coordination among relevant stakeholders to promote sustainable cross border connections in the Cooperation area

Start
April 2018

The project is closed

End
February 2021



NEEDS ADDRESSED

Develop the maritime connectivity networks in the South Adriatic Area

MAIN TARGET GROUPS

NGOs, Public authorities (local, regional and national), business support organisation, higher education and research

PARTNERSHIP



5 partners



LEAD PARTNER

Cooperation and Development Institute, Albania

PROJECT OUTPUTS *



2 pilots, products, services, demonstration projects

PROJECT BUDGET

EUR
655 950

Contract total

EUR
557 558

of which IPA funds

EUR
98 392

Co-financing

* Output indicators data have been provided by the LP/PP during the case study interviews and in the web-survey. Data should be further checked and validated by the JTS

Project identification

Starting date: 01.04.2018

Ending date: 28.02.2021

Duration: 35 months 0 days

Overall budget: 655 950 25 Euro

Expenditures approved by December 2020: 434 788.00 Euro

List of project partners:

PP/LP	Name	Nationality	City	Budget allocated	Expenditures approved (December 2020)
LP	Cooperation and Development Institute	ALBANIA	Tirana	238 384	219 082.85
pp	Apulia Region - Directory for International Policies	ITALIA	Bari	213 750	110 882.56
pp	European Movement in Montenegro	MONTENEGRO	Podgorica	72 336	33 624.13
pp	Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy	ALBANIA	Tirana	65 793.25	30 170.29
pp	Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs	MONTENEGRO	Podgorica	65 687.00	41 028.17

Project preparation

What is the project overall objective?

The SAGOV project aims to enhance the maritime connectivity networks in the South Adriatic Area. The project has the ultimate goal of challenging national institutions to prioritize projects for the implementation of new maritime infrastructures, strengthening the connectivity between South-Adriatic countries.

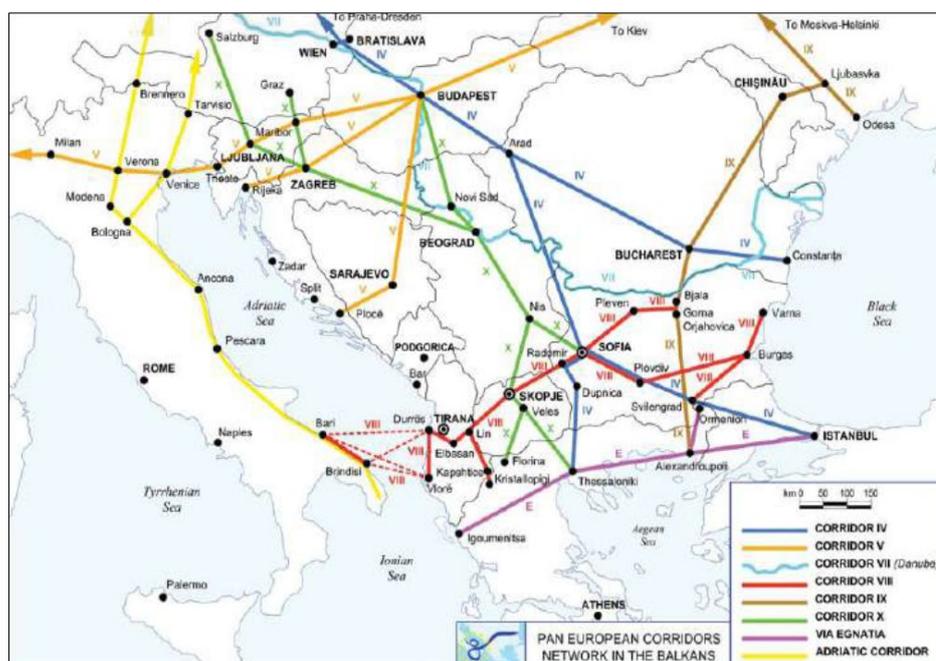
The project idea stems from a lack of interoperability and connectivity in the field of maritime transport between the three countries. Indeed, especially Albania and Montenegro face many criticalities in the implementation of their connectivity transport policies. Most relevant criticalities refer to the high fragmentation on the two sides of the South Adriatic Area, the absence of well-structured regional and national policies concerning maritime transports, the low interoperability and interconnectivity transport systems. From the Italian side there is the need of further reinforce the coordination on transport policies from the technical point of view, as standpoint for the enhancement of trade relations among the three countries.

In order to achieve this major objective of a more sustainable and enhanced connectivity, the project will develop innovative solutions and tools to be used by relevant stakeholders for the implementation, the monitoring and the planning of cross-border cooperation policies. Project approach consists in three phases: the technical phase, which provides the involvement of technical actors, the identification of geographical specificities and the project cycle management.

How was the partnership set up?

The partnership involves five partners, 2 from Albania, 2 from Montenegro and 1 from Italy. SAGOV benefits from the support of the Albanian Ministry of Infrastructures and Energy, the Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs of Montenegro, and the Directory for International Policies of Apulia Region. The involvement of the three public authorities from all 3 countries has been essential in order to implement concrete policies in the field of maritime connectivity.

The project also involves as associated partners, the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania (MFE) and the Italian Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport - Coast Guard Headquarters.



Source: Corridor VIII Secretariat

Project implementation

The most relevant activities realised during the implementation of the SAGOV project, concern mainly the creation of tools and innovative solutions aiming at monitoring the flows of maritime transport in the Adriatic Sea, in order to boost connectivity in the South Adriatic area. However, the project also included intangible activities. The project organised several meetings, workshops and round tables with relevant stakeholders, with the aim of elaborating a maritime road map for policy development.

In order to implement the tools for monitoring maritime flows, the project involved technical experts from the Italian Coast Guard that, thanks to their long-term experience in the management of such monitoring systems, provided useful contribution for the technical development of the instruments. Beside this, the project involved public authorities to support the implementation of the project and mostly, to increase the awareness on maritime transport issue. Thanks to this “political” involvement, the project elaborated a Trilateral Agreement – Memorandum of Understanding – namely a binding agreement according to which the three countries strengthen their cooperation to define efficient policies in the field of Connectivity Agenda. Furthermore, the project plan also foresees the implementation of a pilot transport connectivity initiative enabling the creation of the *Vessel Traffic Monitoring Information System (VTMIS)*.

On the 18th of February 2021, during the *Adriatic Connectivity Forum*, the project presented the position paper “*Where does ten-t corridor VIII stand? Its future*”. This marks the end of project activities. The Forum gathered representatives of both Italian and IPA public institutions (the Managing Authority of the Interreg IPA Italy -

Albania - Montenegro Programme, Minister of Capital Investments of Montenegro and the Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania). The event focused on the identification of possible opportunities in the South Adriatic Area that may arise from the Connectivity Agenda, in order to increase trade competitiveness and maritime safety not only in the specific Programme area, but also in the East - West route, that goes from the Black Sea to the Italian Adriatic regions, namely the so-called Corridor VIII¹³.

What output indicator does your project contribute to?

The main outputs of the project are:

- 1) Transport Connectivity e-platform with "Semaphore System", which is an artisanal product, namely a tool for monitoring the flows in the Adriatic Sea area. The e-platform implemented by the SAGOV project aims at increasing the level of coordination and interconnectivity between Italy, Albania and Montenegro by supporting business development and growth.
- 2) Trilateral MoU/Agreement strengthening maritime coordination in South Adriatic Area. The agreement is a binding document among the three countries establishing a cross-border cooperation on connectivity issues.
- 3) A mature connectivity project prepared for access to finance enabling the creation of the VTMS. The *Vessel Traffic Monitoring Information System*, is a monitoring tool already implemented by the Italian Coast Guard and by Montenegro, while the Albanian partner did not know the existence of such an instrument. This tool allows technical experts in the field of maritime transportation to monitor maritime flows from the two sides of the Adriatic border within a radius of almost 60 km. This instrument will serve not only for granting more safety and security in the Adriatic Sea, but also to address critical issues related to maritime pollution.

The table below shows the achievements of the project output indicator.

Programme output indicator	Title of the project output	Target	Achieved
Products and services, pilot and demonstration projects	i) Transport Connectivity e-platform with Semaphore System	3	2
	ii) MoU – Memorandum of Understanding		
	iii) VTMS - Vessel Traffic Monitoring Information System		

According to the information collected both from programme documents and through case study interviews, the project realised two of three proposed outputs. These include: the realisation of the Transport Connectivity e-platform and the creation of the Trilateral Agreement.

Which factors has hampered or facilitated the project implementation? E.g., how the COVID is influencing the project implementation?

The analysis shows that financial flow and certification of expenditures represent the main critical issues hampering project implementation. In particular, the project lead partner faced many difficulties in receiving the advanced payments (it took almost 9 months after the signature of the contract for receiving the first advanced payment, and 2 years for receiving the entire reimbursement). This bottleneck could be attributed to various factors. The most relevant refers to the creation of a specific bank account. Indeed, public administration in Albania do not dispose of their own bank account. To receive programme reimbursement,

¹³ Corridor VIII is a PAN European Corridor, which has been not completed yet, including both roads and rail routes. This corridor goes from the Apulia Region to the Baltic Black Sea with the aim of ensuring major connectivity in this Area.

they should open a new account and the procedure is complicated, especially for local public administration, which are often discouraged to participate to such projects.

Additionally, certification procedures in revealed to be very long and complicated. These criticalities are particularly evident for the Albanian partners, for which reporting and certification procedures faced long delays.

Conversely, with regard to the Montenegrin partners, the reporting and certification procedures worked very well.

In this regard, it is possible to underline some specificities. Italy and Montenegro can benefit from the revolving fund, which is a financial mean enabling these countries to start the expenditure process. However, Albania does not have this kind of instrument and this provoked a long-term period of bloc in terms of expenditure certification. Indeed, while Italy and Montenegro certified respectively 100% and 98% of the expenditures, in Albania this percentage amounted to 12%. Due to these difficulties Albanian partners decided to temporarily stop the implementation of the project activities.

Apart from these technical criticalities, Covid-19 pandemic has also affected project implementation. Project activities have been modified (i.e. online meetings) and rescheduled. However, project partners managed to realise almost all the planned activities.

Project results

What are the results achieved by the project?

The project selected the programme result indicator “Agreements for cross-border passengers and freight sustainable transport systems and multimodal mobility solutions”. The description of the results refers to the Trilateral Memorandum of Understanding/Agreements for maritime coordination in the South Adriatic, that is also one of the three project output.

Programme result indicator	Title of the project result	Target	Achieved
Agreements for cross-border passengers and freight sustainable transport systems and multimodal mobility solutions	Trilateral Memorandum of Understanding/Agreements for maritime coordination in the South Adriatic	1	1

What is the added value of your project?

The main project added value is certainly related to the promotion of a common and coordinated governance of the maritime transports. The creation of the Transport Connectivity e-platform is a perfect example of this added value. Indeed, through this digital tool, the project ensures a more coordinated governance by providing tailored support and visibility to both projects and initiatives linked with connectivity themes. Through the creation of this platform and the involvement of multilevel actors and stakeholders, the project tries to establish an innovative mechanism of governance model. The main goal of SAGOV is indeed not to design transport policies, but rather trying to understand how the governance works in this specific field. Based on the project application form, the project:

- promotes a better governance;
- It allows to face common threats and obstacles;
- It promotes international networks;

The project also allows to overcome common obstacles stemming from the lack of interconnectivity between countries/regions belonging to the Programme Area. Through the signature of the Memorandum of

Understanding the three countries/regions are engaged in overcoming the obstacles related to the connectivity field in the South Adriatic Area. Indeed, in the trilateral Agreement is clearly underlined the importance of facing cross-border obstacles in order to increase economic growth, trade relations, citizens' welfare¹⁴, for a better integration in the connectivity field.

Finally, since the project takes into account also the broader frame of Balkan Region, through its interest on the future of Corridor VIII, it also allows to create international relations and reinforcing the existing one. As already mentioned, the final event focusing on the future of Corridor VIII and implemented in the frame of SAGOV project, allowed the three partners, mostly as regards Apulia Region, to expand their ambition across the specific geographic area of the project. Indeed, through the information collected during the interview with the Italian PP, there is the willingness to launch an initiative that will connect the Eastern Balkan Region with western Europe, also involving Macedonia and Bulgaria, which are part of the same geographic area of the project partners.

Durability and capitalisation potential

The durability of the project is ensured by the Transport Connectivity e-platform. Indeed, on the basis of the information collected through the analysis of project documents (i.e. application form), the development of the exhaustive mapping of transport connectivity in the South Adriatic area, will serve as base for further initiatives in this geographic area. Through the purpose of a specific methodological approach and the gathering of information on maritime transport connectivity over the time, the e-platform will be the most relevant instrument of the project ensuring its durability.

Possible presence of CBC obstacles

Following the analysis of programme documents and through the interviews conducted by the evaluator, it can be observed some emerging obstacles related to the political dimension, dealing mainly with different governance systems. The main problems, indeed, are related to the governance, especially on how the policy makers get together and operate. The problem is how actors manage to organise between each other. That is why the project focuses much more on the governance rather than legal and administrative issues. Indeed, the project has been implemented by considering the *Acquis Communautaire* as the principal legal guideline, enabling partners to operate in a specific legal framework. The project did not face any particular administrative obstacles preventing its implementation.

¹⁴ Memorandum of Cooperation between Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania, the Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs of Montenegro, and Puglia Region, p.2 https://sagov.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/sagov.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/files/2020-05/2020-04-27_Trilateral-MoU-Signed_SAGOV_0.pdf