

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



Interreg - IPA CBC
Italy - Albania - Montenegro



Thematic report on Small-scale projects

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I Acronyms

CP – Cooperation Programme

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

SO – Specific Objective

2 Executive summary

The objective of the report is to analyse the performance of the small-scale projects approved by the Programme and to verify how these projects are contributing to the achievements of the Programme objectives.

This first chapter summarises key findings emerged from the assessment of small-scale projects funded under the Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme 2014-2020.

Small-scale projects have been funded under the targeted call for proposal, launched by the Programme on April 4th, 2019. The call, including both standard and small-scale projects, covered all SOs, except SO 3.1 as the entire amount of P.A. 3 had been allocated to S.O. 3.2. energy efficiency. The topics have been identified through a gap analysis performed by the Joint Secretariat, discussed and adopted at the Joint Monitoring Committee meeting of Podgorica on April 17th, 2018.

In line with the Programme willingness to contribute to simplification for beneficiaries, especially small organisations, the call foresaw the possibility, for project applicants, to apply for a targeted “normal project” or for “small-scale project”.

The introduction of small-scale projects is in line with the Programme objective to test innovative financing options, also in compliance with the proposals for regulations 2021-2027 issued by the European Commission (see ETC Regulation, Small Project Fund). Moreover, the Programme decided to introduce the so-called ‘small-scale projects’ based on the results of the gap analysis carried out after the first call for proposals which showed an underrepresentation of small associations, NGOs, local communities.

The total amount allocated to the call is of about 14 MEUR allocated (of which 11.5 MEUR EU contribution). The portion of the total amount dedicated to small-scale projects is of 1.5 MEUR, of which about 1.275 MEUR of EU contribution.

Rules for project selection - In general, small-scale projects’ selection follows the rules of the targeted call, however, specific eligibility rules have been settled in Annex I of the Targeted Call for Proposal. Grants dedicated to small-scale projects shall exclusively reimburse eligible costs declared by beneficiaries based on a lump sum. To cover the total amount of the project budget, several lump sums could be combined to fund different project activities (Preparation cost; Workshop, seminars and conferences; Incoming missions & B2B meetings).

In this regard, small-scale projects represent a real simplification of the reporting procedures. Beneficiaries are not requested to provide supporting administrative documentations to receive a refund. They only need to prove the reality and existence of the output. If the activity has taken place, it should be reported. And if completed, the project will be reimbursed with the full amount that was budgeted.

113 project proposals were submitted under the targeted call for proposal, 93 of which were considered eligible. **59 were the standard project proposals and 34 the small-scale eligible project proposals. 50% of the small-scale project proposals has been approved and funded.**

Beneficiaries - The **17 approved projects involve 40 partners** (including the 17 LPs). Albania and Italy have the same number of partners, while beneficiaries from Montenegro are almost one third compared to

the other countries. Regarding lead partners, beneficiaries from Italy lead almost all projects with 89% while LPs from Albania are 11%. None of the LPs are from Montenegro. Based on the results of the survey addressed to the lead beneficiaries of approved projects, 81.3% of them was not an Interreg project partner in the previous programming period, demonstrating the **capacity of the small-scale call to attract newcomers** to the Programme.

Looking at the types of beneficiaries, the analysis of the data reveals a **prevalence of interest groups including NGOs which represent 50% of the partners and 47% of the total budget allocated. The analysis shows that the underrepresentation of small associations, NGOs and local communities, which emerged from the gap analysis carried out after the first call for proposals, was successfully counterbalanced with the targeted small-scale call.**

Other types of partners include 4 higher education/research centres/ universities (2 from Italy and 2 from Montenegro). The total number of public authorities (national, regional and local authorities) participating is 7, the majority of which is represented by local and national authorities (3 each) and only one regional authority. As reported above, the limited representation of public authority is in line with the Programme objective of involving small associations, NGOs, local communities.

Projects' performance - Small-scale projects approved under the targeted call started in 2020 (the majority in the month of July 2020). They were all consequently supposed to end during 2021. However, the impact of COVID-19 and the problems related to delays in the certification flow led to an extension of the deadline for the project closure.

Out of the 17 approved small-scale projects, 16 benefitted from an extension of the deadlines. According to information provided by the JS, a six-months extension has been granted to the majority of small-scale projects. **Based on JS data, 13 projects are now closed while the remaining 4 (ROOTs, SkEye Re-sources and ECSYT) will close between May and June 2022.**

With regards to the absorption of the available budget, the analysis relies on JS data, updated in February 2022. However, it is worth mentioning that 10 projects have closed their activities in December 2021 and in some cases, their reported expenditures are currently under assessment. All above said, **the amounts approved by MA and confirmed by the CA so far, are approximately the 53% of the total budget.**

In consideration of these premises, **it is very likely that the financial performance of these projects will improve in the next months.**

As regards the physical performances of small-scale projects, **the analysis of the outputs and results achieved by the Programme by the end of 2021 shows that what has been achieved mostly depends on the projects financed under the first and the thematic calls for proposal.** However, as several projects closed their activities on December 2021, their outputs and results achieved have not been considered while preparing the 2021 AIR.

Nonetheless, **some small-scale projects approved under SO 2.1, 2.2 and 3.2 already reported some achievements in terms of outputs production** (e.g. FRIENDS4FAMILY, CASTER, CAVES, REMOTE, NetFolk and DE-RESS).

“Direct results” - Data collected from the survey confirms 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.** Beside the “intangibles” it is also interesting to notice that under some SOs (especially under SO 3.2 and 2.1), projects have implemented joint strategies and tested new tools and solutions.

For what concerns “benefits” brought to the territories by the project’s activities and outputs, data collected from the survey addressed to LPs of small-scale projects shows that all approved small-scale projects **contribute to enhancing knowledge about specific challenges of the area** and to **increasing awareness and more engagement of local actors**. Almost 70% of approved projects also contributes to increasing skills and competences of key actors and to increasing attractiveness of the cooperation area.

As regards the provision of **more efficient/effective delivery of public services, a limited number of projects declared to contribute to the result and only few small-scale projects contribute to better governance in the area**. This is expected considering the limited time and amounts available for these projects. Additionally, the limited presence of public authorities involved in these projects does not consent to really impact on the governance of the cooperation area.

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. The present report, that is an additional product not explicitly included in the Technical Offer, provides a preliminary analysis of the **small-scale projects financed under the targeted call of the Interreg Italy-Albania-Montenegro 2014-2020**.

The preliminary evaluation of the approved small-scale projects is divided into the following sections:

- 1) Analysis of the progress in the implementation of the call;
- 2) Analysis of the impacts;

Different tools have been used by the evaluators to answer the relevant evaluation questions (desk analysis, interviews with programme authorities, survey, 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 performance and the results of the small-scale projects financed under the targeted call for proposal of the Interreg Italy-Albania-Montenegro 2014-2020 Programme. 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
	Support during the application phase
	Financial progress
	Output indicators
	Result indicators
Analysis of impacts	Project outputs
	“Direct results”

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 (February 2022) represented the key starting point for the evaluation. Additionally, the analysis has been fine-tuned thanks to the information collected through interviews with the JS – during spring 2021.

Furthermore, the evaluators developed a survey involving all lead partners of approved small-scale projects. Indeed, since none of the beneficiaries of small-scale projects had previously answered to the web-survey carried out during Spring 2021 – and addressed to all Programme beneficiaries – the evaluators decided to develop an additional survey, directly sent by emails to all lead partners of approved small-scale projects. The information collected supported the assessment of projects’ implementation and the progresses made in terms of outputs and results.

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

Table 2 - Data sources

Desk analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme documents • Programme web site and projects portals • Application forms and progress reports (if available) • Available literature on policy and programme
	Available databases (e.g. <i>cohesiondata</i>)
	Data retrieved from the monitoring and reporting system
 Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme bodies involved: JS
Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey addressed to all LPs of the approved small-scale projects

5 Analysis of the progress in the implementation of the call



5.1 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

On October 23rd, 2018 the Programme Joint Monitoring Committee, reunited in Tirana, formally approved the text of the Targeted Call for Proposal¹.

The Targeted Call for proposal is a strategic and key call since it targeted specific topics, which have been addressed in the adopted Cooperation Programme, but they have not been tackled, or not sufficiently been tackled, by the first call for standard projects and by the thematic projects. The topics have been identified through a gap analysis developed by the Joint Secretariat, discussed and adopted at the Joint Monitoring Committee meeting of Podgorica on April 17th, 2018.

The table below reported the topics identified by the gap analysis.

Table 3 – Targeted call for proposal –missing topics identified

Specific Objective	Missing topics
S.O. 1.1 Competitiveness	Social innovation/inclusion
	Blue and green economy
S.O. 2.1 Tourism	Family tourism
	Sport/adventure tourism
	Youngsters' tourism
S.O. 2.2 Culture	Arts other than visual arts (music, literature, etc.)
S.O. 3.2 Energy	Common energy planning
	Adoption of European standards in the RES and RUE sector for public administration
S.O. 4.1 Transport	Multimodal connections
	Custom procedure
	Connections between the main cross border transport infrastructures and the EU trans-European corridors
	Improvement of maritime connections
	Optimization of out of standard loads

Source: Targeted call for Proposals

Moreover, based on the results of the gap analysis carried out after the first call for proposals (i.e. underrepresentation of small associations, NGOs, local communities), the Programme decided to introduce the so-called 'small scale projects'. In line with the Programme willingness to contribute to simplification for

¹ https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2019-04/Targeted_call_for_Proposals%2BAnnex1_v3_0_final_04042019.pdf

beneficiaries, especially small organisations, the call foresaw the possibility, for project applicants, to apply for a targeted “normal project” or for “small scale project”.

The introduction of small-scale projects is in line with the Programme objective to test innovative financing options, also in compliance with the proposals for regulations 2021-2027 issued by the European Commission (see ETC Regulation, Small Project Fund).

The targeted call for normal and small-scale projects was launched the April 4th. 2019. The call covered all SOs, except SO 3.1 as the entire amount of P.A. 3 has been allocated to S.O. 3.2. energy efficiency. The total amount allocated is of about 14 MEUR allocated (of which 11.5 MEUR EU contribution). The portion of the total amount dedicated to small scale projects is of 1.5 MEUR, of which about 1.275 MEUR of EU contribution.

The table below provides the breakdown of the small-scale projects’ financial allocation among the four-priority axis of the programme.

Table 4 – Breakdown of small-scale projects financial allocation among priority axis

Axis	IPA Contribution (85%)	National Contribution (15%)	Total (100%)
1. Competitiveness	85 000,00	15 000,00	100 000,00
2. Tourism	295 517,90	52 150,22	347 668,12
3. Environment	476 812,27	84 143,34	560 955,61
4. Transport	417 669,83	73 706,44	491 376,27
Total	1 275 000,00	225 000,00	1 500 000,00

Source: Annex I to the Target Call for Proposals- Small-Scale Projects

In general, small-scale projects’ selection follows the rules of the targeted call, however, specific eligibility rules have been settled in Annex I of the Targeted Call for Proposal.

Grants dedicated to small-scale projects shall exclusively reimburse eligible costs declared by beneficiaries based on a lump sum. To cover the total amount of the project budget, several lump sums could be combined to fund different project activities.

In this regard, small-scale projects represent a real simplification of the reporting procedures. Beneficiaries are not requested to provide supporting administrative documentations to receive a reimbursement. They only need to prove the reality and existence of the output. If the activity has taken place, it should be reported. And if completed, the project will be reimbursed with the full amount that was budgeted.

Lump sums could be used for three typologies of actions:

- 1) Preparation cost
- 2) Workshop, seminars and conferences
- 3) Incoming missions & B2B meetings.

Preparation cost

According to Article 2(1) of Regulation 481/2014, eligible expenditures shall relate to the costs of initiating or initiating and implementing an operation or part of an operation. Approved Projects are entitled to receive reimbursement of their preparatory costs (as considered as initiating costs of an operation) in the form of a lump sum in the total amount of **EUR 5 000 €** (including IPA contribution and national co-financing).

Preparatory cost lump sums may cover costs of meetings with potential partners, studies, translation of documents, related staff costs, consultations, external expert costs for preparation of the documentation.

Per each project, only one lump sums of this type of activity can be allocated.

Workshop, seminars and conferences

The eligible costs are linked to the organisation of events, meetings, seminars, conferences, debates, in particular costs relating to organisation, renting rooms, interpretation, travel, subsistence and accommodation, experts, etc.

Lump sums under the category “Workshop, seminars and conferences” cover the costs for the executive planning of the event, logistical assistance, fee for speakers, rental services and setting up locations, hostess, interpret and catering services, preparation and implementation of the promotional campaigns, event follow-up, kit-event realization, etc.

To receive the reimbursement, projects should implement **at least 1 day event and at least 40 participants per event**.

As reported in Annex I of the Targeted Call for proposals, the amounts to be reimbursed have been set considering the different costs of living in the three countries:

	Italy Total (IPA contribution + National co-financing)	Albania Total (IPA contribution + National co-financing)	Montenegro Total (IPA contribution + National co-financing)
Workshop, seminars and conferences (amount for single event)	EUR 17 000	EUR 12 000	EUR 11 000

Incoming missions & B2B meetings

As regard incoming missions and B2B meetings, lump sums may cover the costs of incoming activities, including travel and accommodation, rental services and setting up locations, hostess, interpret and catering services, preparation and implementation of the promotional campaigns, event follow-up, kit-event realization, et.

Projects are entitled to receive reimbursement in the form of a lump sum in the total amount **set in the table below, for at least 1 meeting with 10 economic operators**.

	Italy Total (IPA contribution + National co-financing)	Albania Total (IPA contribution + National co-financing)	Montenegro Total (IPA contribution + National co-financing)
Incoming missions & B2B meetings (amount for single event)	EUR 21 000	EUR 15 000	EUR 13 000

The management verification on the costs declared as lump sums differs in case of project preparation activity and workshops/incoming missions.

Indeed, cost verification for project preparation lump sum simply relies on the existence of the project itself, which can be proved through the submission of the project application form and its compulsory attachments. To submit a regular application, project partners should have carried out several preparatory activities. The verification of the AFs is replicated during the application assessment (at eligibility check, at quality assessment, during the contracting phase and at reporting). Responsible Programme authorities for verification is the Managing Authority, supported by the JS and the NIPs.

As regards the verification of the costs for workshops and incoming missions, this is essentially based on the occurrence of the event (workshop or incoming missions). The proof that the event took place is verified during the implementation phase (JS or NIP staffs are invited to participate) and at reporting.

Unlike the preparation costs, projects should provide and upload attached to the project report i) the documents produced for the event preparation (agenda, invitation, participant lists, event poster, news, publications, studies, etc.), ii) the documents produced during the event (signature lists, photo and video materials, etc.) and iii) the documents produced after the event (minutes, summary, meeting evaluation forms filled in, etc.). Responsible Programme authorities for verification is the Managing Authority, supported by the JS and the NIPs.

All costs declared as lump sums shall be eligible if they correspond to the lump sums set out in the estimated budget for the activity and if the corresponding tasks or parts of the action have been properly implemented in accordance with Application Form.

As regards partners, according to Annex I of the Targeted Call for Proposal, the total number of partners per each project must not exceed three (3) including the Lead Partner. Projects can also have associated partners, taking part to the activities without receiving financing, for a maximum of one per partner.

NGOs and social partners are strongly encouraged to participate. According to article 2 of the above-mentioned annex, “*Legal entities being universities, research centres / bodies, as well as national ministries or Italian regional authorities I 3, in “Small Scale Projects”, in addition to the other ones, are allowed to apply as lead partners in maximum one small scale project and as partner in maximum one small scale project per specific objective, i.e. max. 2 projects per S.O. in total, i.e. max. 10 in total*”.

To sum-up, key rules for standard projects are:

- Total n. of partners must not exceed three including LP
- Maximum total budget (incl. national co-financing) of 100 000 EUR
- The project implementation shall not be longer than 12 months.

113 project proposals were submitted under the targeted call, 93 of which were considered eligible. 59 were the standard project proposals and 34 the small-scale eligible project proposals. 50% of the small-scale project proposals has been approved and funded.

The table below provides the numbers of approved small-scale projects per SO and the related budget (as per official determination of Puglia Region of the July 2020), while the subsequent table, provides the full list of approved projects.

Table 5 Targeted call small-scale projects: number of approved projects and total budget allocated

Specific Objective	N. projects	Budget EUR
1.1 - Enhance the framework conditions for the development of SMEs cross border market	1	91 000
2.1 - Boost attractiveness of natural and cultural assets to improve a smart and sustainable economic development	6	428 000
2.2 - Increase the cooperation of the key actors of the area for the delivery of innovative cultural and creative products	2	67 000
3.1 - Increase cross border cooperation strategies on water landscapes	-	-
3.2 - Promote innovative practices and tools to reduce carbon emission and to improve energy efficiency	4	298 000

4.1 - Increase coordination among relevant stakeholders to promote sustainable cross border connections in the cooperation area	4	306 000
Total	17	1 190 000

Source: Official determination of Puglia Region of the July 2020

Table 6 Targeted call small-scale projects: approved projects per SO

Project acronym	Specific Objective	Lead partner	Project budget EUR
LONETA	1.1	Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change	91 000,00
CASTER	2.1	Municipality of Santeramo in Colle	95 000,00
CAVES	2.1	Martinese Speleological Group	54 000,00
EXCELLENT	2.1	Municipality of Brindisi	55 000,00
EXTRA	2.1	Management Consortium of Torre Guaceto	87 000,00
FRIENDS4FAMILY	2.1	Vlora Regional Council	67 000,00
ROOTs	2.1	PRO LOCO Association of TRIGGIANO	70 000,00
NetFolk	2.2	Rhymers' Club Cultural Associations	34 000,00
REMOTE	2.2	KOREJA Social Cooperative	33 000,00
DE-RESS	3.2	National Energy Technological District (DiTNE)	55 000,00
ENEA	3.2	Ce.F.A.S. - Training and High Specialization Center	94 000,00
Re-resources	3.2	Consortium of Industrial Development Area of Brindisi	55 000,00
ECSYT	4.1	National Confederation of Artisans, Small, and Medium Sized Enterprises (CNA), Association of Brindisi Province	70 000,00
PORTS 4.0	4.1	ITS Foundation for sustainable mobility - GE.IN.LOGISTIC.	94 000,00
SESC	3.2	Ismail Qemali Vlore University	94 000,00
SkEye	4.1	Technological Aerospace District	93 000,00
TRADAM	4.1	University of Salento	49 000,00

Source: own elaboration based on JS data

5.2 TYPES OF BENEFICIARIES



The 17 projects approved involve 40 partners (including the 17 LPs). As illustrated by the table below, Albania and Italy have the same number of partners, while beneficiaries from Montenegro are almost one third compared to the other countries. Regarding lead partners, beneficiaries from Italy lead almost all projects with 89% while LPs from Albania are 11%. None of the LPs are from



Montenegro.

Based on the results of the survey addressed to the lead beneficiaries of approved projects, 81.3% of them was not an Interreg project partner in the previous programming period, demonstrating the capacity of the small-scale call to attract newcomers to the Programme. For what concerns the distribution of the allocated budget across the countries, also in this case Italy leads with 58% of the budget allocated to Italian beneficiaries, followed by Albania (31%) and Montenegro (11%).

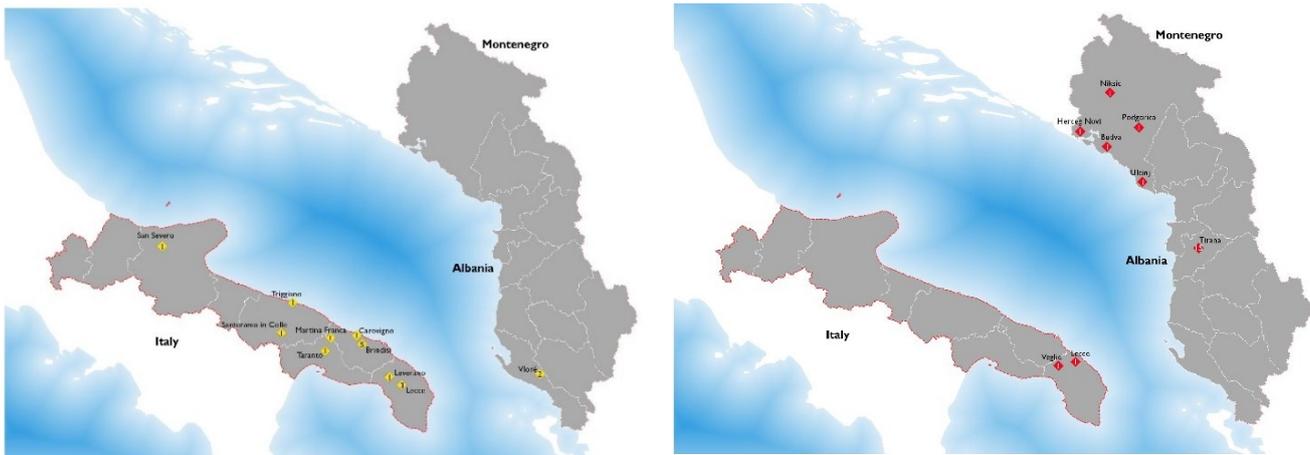
Table 7 Distribution of partners, LP and budget across countries

Country	N. partners	N. LP	Budget EUR
ALB	17	2	370 000
ITA	17	15	691 000
MNE	6	0	129 000
Tot	40	17	1 190 000

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 (Brindisi, Lecce, Tirana and Podgorica).

Map 1 Geographical distribution of lead partners (left panel) and project 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 interest groups including NGOs which represent 50% of the partners, out of which 7 are LP. The analysis shows that the underrepresentation of small associations, NGOs and local communities, which emerged from the gap analysis carried out after the first call for proposals, was successfully counterbalanced with the target small-scale call.

Other types of partners include 4 higher education/research centres/ universities (2 from Italy and 2 from Montenegro). The total number of public authorities (national, regional and local authorities) participating is 7, the majority of which is represented by local and national authorities (3 each) and only one regional authority. As reported above, the limited representation of public authority is in line with the Programme objective of involving small associations, NGOs, local communities. However, it is worth mentioning that out of a total of 7 public authorities involved as beneficiaries of small-scale projects, 5 are from Albania (the 3 national authorities, one local and one regional authorities). This shows that, especially in Albania, the Programme should make further efforts to facilitate the participation of non-public bodies organisations.

According to data provided in the table below, extracted from eMS, the interest groups/NGOs/no profit organisations represent 50% of the total partners (9 from Albania, 3 from Montenegro, 8 from Italy) and 47% of the total budget allocated.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that the budget allocated to public authorities (national, regional and local) is the 20% of the total budget.

Higher education/research centres/university and training centre and schools, none of which are from Albania, cover the 13% of the allocated budget.

Table 8 Type of partners: number and budget

Type	N. partners	Budget EUR
business support organisation	3	103 000
education/training centre and school	1	43 000
higher education/research center/university	4	113 000
infrastructure and (public) service provider	1	12 000
<i>interest groups including NGOs/no profit organization</i>	20	557 000
local public authority	3	135 000
national public authority	3	78 000

Type	N. partners	Budget EUR
other	4	120 000
regional public authority	1	29 000

Source: DB list of operations approved + eMs

5.3 SUPPORT DURING THE APPLICATION PHASE



The support by the Interreg Italy-Albania-Montenegro programme bodies to beneficiaries of all projects during project implementation is provided both at programme and national level.

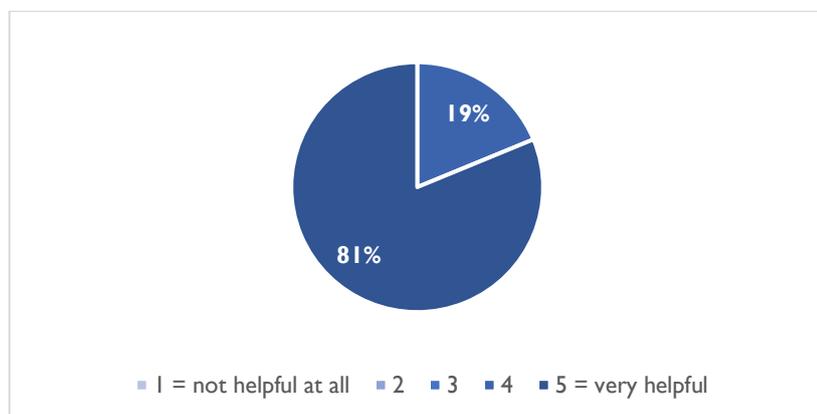
Beside the documents made available through the Programme website to support potential beneficiaries (Implementation Manual, Subsidy Contract, Guidelines for eMS, FAQ, etc.), the JTS also organised Open Days.



The survey addressed to LPs allowed to collect information on the beneficiaries' perception regarding the support provided by the Programme during project implementation and the main difficulties encountered. Data shows that project development (including partnership meetings, drafting, submission) took between 8 and 32 weeks for 50% of the LPs. In general, data from the survey reveals that beneficiaries appreciate the tools and support provided. Almost all LPs (87.5%) requested clarification and support to Programme authorities for the development of their proposal. Support requests have been addressed specifically to JS and only in small portion to MA and NIP.

Moreover, all lead partners found that the information provided by the Programme regarding rules on eligibility of expenditure was helpful, with 81% of the respondents who considered it 'very helpful', as shown in the graph below.

Figure 2 To what extent is the information provided by the Programme helpful with reference to the rules on eligibility of expenditures? (1=not helpful at all, 5= very helpful)



Source: survey to small-scale projects LPs (2022)

The survey also allowed to investigate the perception of the beneficiaries on the most challenging types of activities. As illustrated by the figure below, all the activities mentioned in the question can be seen as a potential source of difficulties for the beneficiaries. However, most respondents considered them as "easy" or "very easy" to be carried out, and none of them as "very difficult". In particular, it is worth noting that the answer 'certification of expenditure' is considered easy or very easy, meaning that the goal of the small-scale call in simplifying procedures for beneficiaries through the use of SCOs has been successfully achieved.

On the other hand, the use of eMS represents the most difficult of the activities for the lead partners, followed by implementation of project activities and coordination with project partners.

Table 9 - Which project activities do you find most difficult? (1=very easy, 5=very difficult)

Type of activity	1 = very easy	2 = easy	3 = neutral	4 = difficult	5 = very difficult
Coordination with project partners	14%	29%	50%	7%	0%
Implementation of project activities	7%	7%	79%	7%	0%
Certification of expenditure	46%	46%	0%	8%	0%
Reporting on the activities	14%	64%	14%	7%	0%
Use of eMS	7%	36%	29%	29%	0%

Source: survey to small-scale projects LPs (2022)

5.4 FINANCIAL PROGRESS



Small-scale projects approved under the targeted call started in 2020 (the majority in the month of July 2020). They were all consequently supposed to end during 2021. However, the impact of COVID-19 and the problems related to delays in the certification flow led to an extension of the deadline for the project closure. Out of the 17 approved small-scale projects, 16 benefitted from an extension of the deadlines (except for REMOTE, whose activities closed right after 12 months from the project start, with no extension needed). According to information provided by the JS, a six-months extension has been granted to the majority of small-scale projects, excluding the SkEye, ECSYT and Re-sources projects, whose activities have been extended for 12 months.

Based on JS data, 13 projects are now closed while the remaining 4 (ROOTs, SkEye Re-sources and ECSYT) will close between May and June 2022.

With regards to the absorption of the available budget, the table below is based on JS data, updated in February 2022. Data reported should be considered carefully. Indeed, 10 projects have closed their activities in December 2021. This implies that their reported expenditures are currently under assessment. These expenditures have not been confirmed by CA yet and thus not included in the table below.

As the table shows, the amounts approved by MA and confirmed by the CA, are approximately the 53% of the total budget.

Table 9 Financial progress – Small-scale projects

SO	Budget EUR	Certified by CA	%
1.1	91 000	38 000	42%
2.1	428 000	329 000	77%
2.2	67 000	67 000	100%
3.2	298 000	122 000	41%
4.1	306 000	69 000	23%
Total	1 190 000	625 000	53%

Source: JS data (updated certifying data to February 2022)

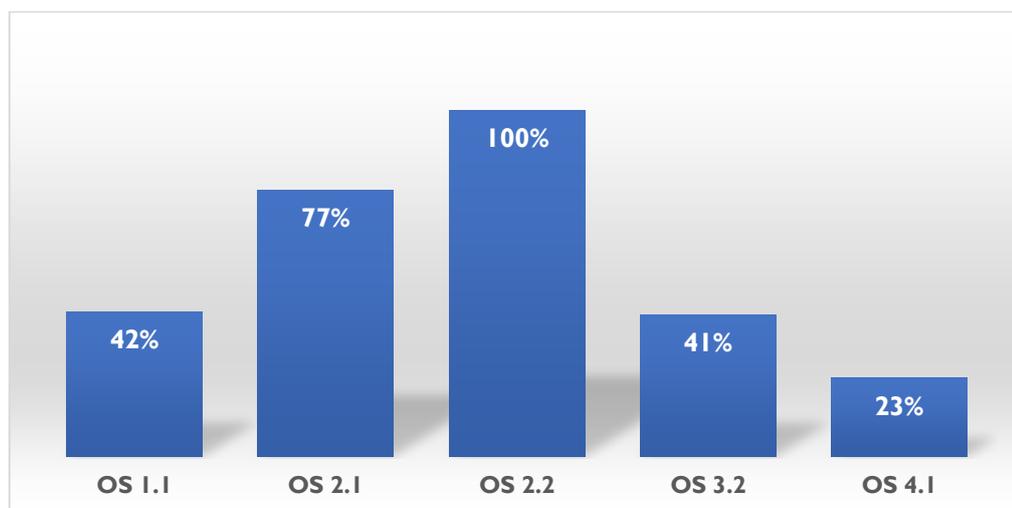
As of February 2022, the analysis of the performance per Specific Objective shows that the 2 projects under SO 2.2 have spent all their budget, while the six approved projects under SO 2.1 have spent the 77% of their budget (CASTER, EXCELLENT and FRIENDS4FAMILY have spent 100% of their budget). The performance of SO 2.1 will probably increase since i) one project, ROOTs, funded under SO 2.1, is still ongoing, and ii) four projects ended in December 2021 and the expenditures reported in their last JPRs have not been confirmed yet.

Regarding SO 3.2, Re-resources is the only one still ongoing out of the 4 financed projects. However, the remaining projects (ENEA, DE-RESS and SESC) closed in December 2021 and, when updated, data on the certified amounts will certainly improve the performance of the OS.

As of February 2022, the worst performances are registered by projects approved under SO 4.1, with only 23% of the budget certified. SkEye, ECSYT and TRADAM have only the first lump-sum certified (5 000 EUR). However, among the three projects, special attention should be dedicated to TRADAM which, unlike the other two that are still in progress, closed its activities in December 2021. According to the information gathered from the JS, the Albanian partner UCCIAL has not reported its expenditure yet – despite several reminders from the JS – and the project LP asked for a new deadline extension to submit an overall JPR.

Nonetheless, SO 4.1 is also the most promising specific objective if we consider that out of the four approved projects, two are still ongoing (SkEye, ECSYT) while other two closed their activities in December 2021 and thus their last reporting has not been certified by CA yet. The graph below shows the performance of the projects according to each SO.

Figure 3 Financial performance of small-scale projects



Source: own elaboration based on JS data (updated certifying data to February 2022)

5.5 CONTRIBUTION TO OUTPUT AND RESULT INDICATORS

As illustrated by the tables below, outputs and results achieved by the Programme by the end of 2021 mostly depends on what has been achieved by the projects financed under the first and the thematic calls for proposal.

As several projects closed their activities on December 2021, their outputs and results achieved have not been considered while preparing the 2021 AIR. For these projects, JPRs are currently under verification of the JTS officers. A comprehensive analysis of the achievements in terms of outputs and results of small-scale projects could be provided in future evaluations.

Table 10 – Small-scale projects output achievements 2021 and expected 2023 (all projects)

PA	ID	Name	CP target 2023	2021	2021	2023
				Achieved	Achieved small scale projects	Expected
1	1.1.2	Number of business and research institutions involved/offering non-financial support	11	46	-	91
	CO04	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	11	105	-	345
2	2.1.1	Number of new products, services and pilot or demonstration projects realized	4	90	FRIENDS4FAMILY: 2 CASTER: 1	76
	2.1.2	Number of valorised sites	4	42	CAVES: 1	34
	2.2.2	Number of cross-border creative platforms created	4	13	REMOTE: 1	20
	CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	4	18	NetFolk: 1	70
3	3.1	Number of new products and services, pilot and demonstration projects realized	15	173	-	140
	3.1.2	Number of users involved (in pilot or demonstration projects).	15	174	DE-RESS: 1	238
4	4.1.1	Number of new products, services, pilot and demonstration projects realized	4	15	-	40
	4.1.2	Number of new multimodal connections for the benefit of passengers and freight	4	0	-	7

Source: own elaboration based on AIR 2021 and on data provided by the JS

Table 11 – Small-scale projects results achievements 2021

PA/OS	Type	Name	PF Baseline	Target 2023	2021 Achieved	Achieved small scale projects
1/1.1	Result	Common interventions aimed to improve the cross-border framework	8	15	7	-
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	2	-
2/2.2	Result	Cross-border networks in the cultural and creative fields	2	2	5	-
2/2.2	Result	Cross-border agreements in the cultural and creative fields	1	3	1	-
3/3.1	Result	Common plans enhancing and safeguarding water landscapes (including marine ones)	3	7	3	-
3/3.2	Result	Common plans for energy efficiency and sustainable energy production	1	4	-	-
4/4.1	Result	Agreements for cross-border passengers and freight sustainable transport systems and multimodal mobility solutions	5	7	2	-

Source: own elaboration based on AIR 2021 and on data provided by the JS

6 Analysis of impacts

This chapter is based on the information collected through the survey addressed to the LPs of approved small-scale projects. Section 6.1 presents the types of outputs realised by the projects while section 6.2 illustrates the types of “direct results”.

6.1 PROJECTS OUTPUTS



Data collected from the survey confirms 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 for each SO shows, 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 implemented joint strategies and tested new tools and solutions.

Table 12 Types of outputs per SO

Types of outputs	TOT	OS 1.1	OS 2.1	OS 2.2	OS 3.2	OS 4.1
Set up of cross-border networks	94%	100%	80%	100%	100%	100%
Elaboration and implementation of joint strategies, actions plan, protocols	69%	0%	80%	100%	75%	50%
Implementation of joint monitoring activities	25%	0%	20%	50%	25%	25%
Joint studies/research	38%	0%	0%	50%	100%	25%
Awareness-raising and capacity building activities	81%	100%	100%	50%	75%	75%
Test of new tools and solutions	31%	0%	60%	50%	25%	0%

Source: survey to small-scale projects LPs

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

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

- Under SO 1.1, **LONETA** creates an innovative collaborative space in which stakeholders, companies and authorities from the involved countries can collaborate on negative emissions technologies themes. Thanks to the mutual learning process of this enlarged network, the project aims at enhancing the administrative, industrial and technical framework conditions for the development of new cross-border green market niches in the programme area.
- Under SO 2.1, **EXCELLENT** sets up the Adriatic Experience Academy, a sustainable model to promote cross-border destinations by valorising cultural heritage and natural resources of less developed areas. The project enhances cross-border cooperation in the field of sustainable tourism, accessibility, visibility and market uptake of less-known traditions and experiences. **CAVES** aims to boost the speleological tourism sector, by creating a cross-border network to exchange

experiences, skills and good practices, mainly related to the use of natural cavities. **FRIENDS4FAMILY** improves the collaboration among rural touristic operators by best practice sharing and know-how transfer related to "family tourism". Through workshops, study visits, and B2B meetings, the project will propose innovative services for families and create a cross-border network of touristic operators to improve the quality of services offered by rural tourism infrastructures, based on public-private partnerships. **EXTRA** aims to enhance targeted tourism sectors such as enogastronomic, green, trekking, biking, fishing, etc., by creating a shared space where the actors involved can meet, exchange and increase knowledge about these sectors, through the presentation of good practices.

- Under SO 2.2, **NetFolk** consolidates a network of folk music associations to develop an innovative, creative and cultural product, contributing to the attractiveness of the Programme area in terms of tourism offer diversification. **REMOTE** creates a network to export some best practices of site management in the programme area.
- Under SO 3.2, **SECS** has the main goal of developing a community relying on smart energy, involving young researchers, students, smart energy providers and consumers. **ENEA** aims at stimulating demand driven research commercialization and technology transfer on energy efficiency, through strategic collaborations interacting in a cross-border Living Lab environment. **DE-RESS** creates strong connections between economic operators, general public and public bodies in order to promote the creation of new "Community Cooperatives" on the importance of common efficiency and sustainable energy plans, while **Re-sources** shares good practices and discusses innovative approaches to energy efficiency, re-use and diversification in the frame of Industry 4.0.
- Under SO 4.1, **SkEye** fosters collaboration among R&D (universities and research centers), industries, SMEs and policy makers to exploit the innovation potential of future aerospace. **ECSYT** creates a network of economic operators in southern Adriatic ports while **PORTS 4.0** implements a solid network of public and private stakeholders in the field of logistics and maritime transport for smart and sustainable development. The creation of a network of expertise between industrial and scientific actors, to promote the cooperative management and integration of transport asset data, is the main scope of **TRADAM**.

Almost all projects analysed are carrying out **awareness-raising and capacity building activities**. For instance:

- Under SO 1.1, **LONETA** organises B2B meetings and workshops to foster early-stage and pilot investments on negative emissions technologies in Puglia, Albania and Montenegro.
- Under SO 2.1, **CAVES** develops workshops and incoming initiatives in the speleological tourism sector, while **EXCELLENT** implements two workshops and one incoming event with travel bloggers to foster networking, capacity-building, education and product validation for a Sustainable Tourism Development. Through workshops, study visits, and B2B meetings, **FRIENDS4FAMILY** proposes innovative services for family-friendly tourist hospitality, while **CASTER** organises conferences focused on the valorisation of sport tourism destinations, as well as institutional seminars, an incoming mission and B2B meetings targeted to public and private tourism stakeholders. **EXTRA** develops a joint programme of workshops and B2B experience laboratories, following the principles of sustainable tourism, with a focus on parks, Natura 2000 sites, traditional agricultural practices, and typical products.
- Under SO 2.2, **NetFolk** carries out two training and knowledge exchange workshops (one in Puglia and one in Albania), involving local music associations and artists.
- Under SO 3.2, **ENEA** organises dedicated workshops to enhance the capacity of public authorities to perform excellent energy efficiency in buildings, while **DE-RESS** teaches private and public stakeholders about new European measures and innovative solutions in the field of energy efficiency.

Re-sources disseminates new practices related to energy saving and energy efficiency in the industrial sector.

- Under SO 4.1, **SkEye** enhances knowledge transfer and market uptake of smart aerospace technologies, while **TRADAM** organises two international conferences (1 in Italy, 1 in Albania) to enable a virtuous exchange of expertise, professionals, best practices, and market opportunities in the Programme area. **ECSYT** organises a cross-border workshop, an international conference and two incoming events to improve knowledge and skills of economic transport operators.

Almost 70% of the approved small-scale projects are contributing to the **elaboration and implementation of joint strategies, action plans, protocols**. For instance:

- Under SO 2.1, **CAVES** promotes the implementation of common action plans for smart management of tourist destinations to be adopted by public authorities in the Programme area, while **EXCELLENT** develops a sustainable model to promote cross-border destinations by valorizing cultural heritage and natural resources of less developed areas. **FRIENDS4FAMILY** proposes a Cross-Border quality branding for family tourism in rural areas, while **CASTER** develops a common and sustainable cross-border sports tourism plan.
- Under SO 2.2, **NetFolk** develops a joint strategy contributing to the attractiveness of the Programme area in terms of tourism offer, while **REMOTE** fosters the creation of a community-led local strategy for urban memory development.
- Under SO 3.2, **ENEA** enhances the elaboration of a joint strategy on energy efficiency, **DE-RESS** focuses on implementing a renewable energy community strategy while **Re-sources** develops a smart industry development strategy.
- Under SO 4.1, **SkEye** favours the endorsement of EU regulations in the aerospace sector in the two IPA countries while **ECSYT** develops a common strategy to increase coordination and efficiency in southern Adriatic ports.

Six out of the 17 approved small-scale projects are carrying out **joint studies/research**. For instance:

- Under SO 2.2, **REMOTE** develops joint research on urban memory valorisation.
- Under SO 3.2, all the four approved projects carry out joint studies and research. More in detail, **SESC** develops joint research concerning the preservation of environmental resources and their impact on social inclusion. **ENEA** and **DE-RESS** produce joint research on the efficient usage of energy while **Re-sources** focuses on innovative approaches to energy efficiency, re-use and diversification in the frame of Industry 4.0.
- Under SO 4.1, **ECSYT** develops joint research to optimize actions of economic operators in southern Adriatic ports, from a logistical, operational, and administrative point of view.

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

- Under SO 2.1, **CAVES** develops speleological tourism itineraries, while **FRIENDS4FAMILY** proposes a cross-border quality branding for family tourism in rural areas.
- Under SO 2.2, **REMOTE** develops new solutions for urban regeneration.
- Under SO 3.2, **ENEA** tests solutions for fostering energy efficiency in buildings.

Only the 25% of the approved small-scale projects are implementing **joint monitoring activities**. It is the case, for instance, of **EXTRA** (SO 2.1) and **REMOTE** (SO 2.2). Under SO 3.2, **SESC** develops joint monitoring of energy-consuming while **PORTS 4.0** monitors transport connection in the programme area.

6.2 “DIRECT RESULTS”



For what concerns “benefits” brought to the territories by the projects activities and outputs, data collected from the survey addressed to LPs of small-scale projects shows that the “direct results” produced by the programme can be traced back to some macro typologies (see table below).

Table 13 Types of “direct results” per SO

Types of results	TOT	SO 1.1	SO 2.1	SO 2.2	SO 3.2	SO 4.1
Enhanced knowledge about specific challenges of the area	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Increased skills and competences of key actors	69%	0%	80%	100%	100%	25%
Increased awareness and more engagement of local actors	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Better governance	19%	0%	40%	50%	0%	0%
Increased attractiveness of the cooperation area	69%	0%	100%	50%	75%	50%
More efficient/effective delivery of public services	25%	0%	20%	0%	75%	0%

Source: survey to small-scale projects LPs

As the table above shows, all approved small-scale projects **contribute to enhancing knowledge about specific challenges of the area** and to **increasing awareness and more engagement of local actors**.

For instance **LONETA** project (under SO 1.1) aims to enhance the administrative, industrial and technical framework conditions for the development of Negative Emission Technologies. **CAVES**, **CASTER**, **FRIENDS4FAMILY**, **EXCELLENT** and **EXTRA**, all projects approved under SO 2.1, contribute to increasing awareness about the challenges faced by the tourism sector in the programme countries, particularly focusing on sustainable tourism, speleological tourism development, family-friendly hospitality, cycling&sailing tourism and targeted tourism sectors (enogastronomic, green, trekking, biking, fishing, etc.).

Under SO 2.2, **REMOTE**, focuses on urban regeneration, strengthening the knowledge and awareness of local actors about the high historical value of some specific urban sites that need to be re-thought and enhanced in a cultural way, while **NetFolk** focuses on enhancing knowledge and exchange experience on folk music to strengthen the cultural relationship of the Programme countries.

As regards SO 3.2, all four approved projects (**SESC**, **ENEA**, **DE-RESS** and **Re-sources**) contribute to enhancing knowledge and raising awareness about the need to encourage the development and implementation of clean energy solutions, focusing on smart energy, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Under SO 4.1, **SkEye** enhances knowledge on future aerospace technologies for innovative transport monitoring system, while **PORTS 4.0** sheds light on the challenges faced by transport operators in the development of smart and sustainable maritime transport strategies. Both **TRADAM** and **ECSYT** create a new shared knowledge network for a better-quality transport service in the Southern Adriatic ports.

Almost 70% of approved small-scale projects reported contributing to **increased skills and competences of key actors**. For example, under SO 2.1 and 2.2:

- **CAVES** implements workshops addressed to speleological tourism operators to hone/upgrade their skills on natural cavities preservation.
- **EXCELLENT** improves skills and competences of tourism operators in cultural heritage sustainable valorisation.
- **EXTRA** increases competences of tourism operators thanks to the implementation of experience laboratories on parks, Natura 2000 sites, traditional agricultural practices, and typical products.
- **REMOTE** enhances site management skills of Albanian tourism operators, in particular of those involved in the preservation of the Forced Labor Camp in Tepelene.

Under SO 3.2, **ENEA** stimulates technology transfer among industries and public authorities through the implementation of a cross-border Living Lab on energy efficiency. **DE-RESS** updates expertise of private and public stakeholders on new European measures for renewable energy exploitation. **Re-sources** increases skills about the use of renewable energies in the industrial field, while **SESC** shares skills about the benefits concerning the preservation of environmental resources and their impact on social inclusion.

Under SO 4.1, **ECSYT** increases skills of economic operators in southern Adriatic ports, from a logistical, operational, and administrative point of view.

With the only exception of the project approved under SO 1.1, most of the projects approved under the remaining SOs contribute to **increased attractiveness of the cooperation area**. For instance, under SO 2.1, all approved projects contribute to this result thanks to the implementation of common strategies and plans to attract tourists. Under SO 2.2, **NetFolk** develops an innovative, creative and cultural product, which contributes to the attractiveness of the Programme area by diversifying the tourism offer. Under SO 3.2, **Re-sources**, for instance, increases the attractiveness of the cooperation area by promoting a more efficient use of natural resources and good practices to reduce GHG emissions. As regards SO 4.1, **ECSYT** increases transport coordination and efficiency of southern Adriatic ports, contributing to increase attractiveness of the Programme area.

As regards the provision of **more efficient/effective delivery of public services**, a limited number of projects declared to contribute to the result. Among these, **ENEA** (under SO 4.1) intends to improve the quality of public services by enhancing the capacity of public authorities to perform excellent EeB results. Under SO 2.1, **CAVES** stimulates public authorities in providing better-quality management of tourist destinations.

Lastly, only few small-scale projects contribute to **better governance in the area**. This is expected considering the limited time and amounts available for these projects. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that it is not easy for such small projects to have an impact on the governance considering that thematic projects, much more important in economic terms, have shown limited capacity in making such an impact.