

## Public notice to partners of

## Strategic Projects

### *Article 17 (3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059*

This document is issued by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat of the Interreg IPA South Adriatic on behalf of the participating countries, represented at the Monitoring Committee. It is published on the website of the Programme <https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/index.php/programme/south-adriatic-2021-27> for transparency. The notice is addressed to the partners of Strategic Projects, identified below.

### INTRODUCTION

The Interreg IPA South Adriatic (Programme) is a trilateral cross border cooperation Programme co-financed by the European Union under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) in the 2021–2027 programming period. It widely builds on the results of the previous programme Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro 2014-2020.

The Programme adopted by the EU Commission is published on the website <https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/programme/south-adriatic-2021-27/south-adriatic-docs>.

In compliance with article 17 (3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, the Programme Appendix 3 includes a list of operations of strategic importance (**strategic projects**), a methodology and timetable to develop these, which is further developed in annex 02.

Starting from 2022, the 2021-2027 Programming Task Force, including representatives of the three participating countries, with the assistance of the Programme Managing Authority (MA) and Joint Secretariat (JS), carried out the first steps of the agreed development procedure. In particular, the Heads of the three National Delegations nominated public authorities, having legal competence on the topic in the respective territories, as Core Partners in project development. These Core Partners are assisted by the Seed Facility, which was set up with 6 national experts, hired to assist them in project development and funded by the 2014-2020 Technical Assistance, in compliance with article 32 (1) of the Implementing Regulation No 447/2014.

## 1. THEMES AND CORE PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY NATIONAL DELEGATIONS

### Themes

Based on the national and regional strategies, within the Specific Objectives of the Programme, the delegations representing the three countries in the 2014-20 Programming Task Force selected following themes for five Strategic Projects, one per Priority Axis of the Programme:

#### No. 1.1 CREATIVE South Adriatic

Objective: Improving framework conditions for cultural & creative Industries, including social SMEs, sustainable tourism SMEs, through digitalisation, & restauration of cultural heritage sites to re-use them as creative hubs/touristic attractions. Focus on youth & women & creative sector, incl. provision of policy & business start-up tools.

The project 1.1. CREATIVE South Adriatic may widely contribute to the achievement of the S.O. 1.1., as it aims at improving the framework conditions for growth of the SMEs, especially in sectors like green tourism, cultural and creative industries, in a sustainable and inclusive way.

#### No. 2.1 RESILIENT South Adriatic

Objective: Increasing climate change adaptation, while preventing risks & becoming resilient to disasters. At the same time, protecting the marine environment & reducing marine pollution with joint cross-border actions. Improving emergency management & system interoperability, as well as civil protection coordination.

The project 2.1. RESILIENT South Adriatic may widely contribute to the achievement of the S.O. 2.1., as it aims at improving the management of risks, especially connected to the marine environment, in a cross-border perspective.

#### No. 3.1 MORE CONNECTED South Adriatic

Objective: Improving maritime & multimodal transport systems, including small investments on ports, fishermen ports, border crossing points, etc., while at the same time decarbonising ports & city-port connections, improving sea, road, air, railway safety & maintenance schemes, along the connectivity Agenda & European Corridors, incl. actions on green cross-border mobility.

The project 3.1. MORE CONNECTED South Adriatic may widely contribute to the achievement of the S.O. 3.1., as it aims at improving the intermodal connections and access to transport hubs of the programme area.

#### No. 4.1 SMART & COMPETITIVE South Adriatic

Objective: Improving people skills and creating new competences, while contributing to growth & competitiveness, through trainings in blue economy sector, digitalisation and other strategic fields, through new and integrated models of trainings, aimed at creating innovation ecosystems in sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, coastal /marine tourism etc., ship building, with a focus on innovative start-ups, SMEs, and S3s actions.

The project 4.1. SMART & COMPETITIVE South Adriatic may widely contribute to the achievement of the S.O. 4.1., as it aims at increasing the skills in the blue economy sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, ship building etc., with a specific focus on more vulnerable social groups.

#### No. 5.1 GOOD GOVERNED South Adriatic

Objective: Increasing efficiency of public administration, through assistance for Pre-Accession and enhancement of operational competencies to manage EU Cohesion in public institutions, in line with the digital agenda, with training actions in ICTs and measures for e-government in the field of control / monitoring of the territories.

The project 5.1. GOOD GOVERNED South Adriatic may widely contribute to the achievement of the S.O. 5.1., as it aims at improving capacities of the public administration in the programme area, especially in view of supporting the pre-accession process.

These topics are further defined with concrete actions and activities during project development.

## EUSAIR

A strong emphasis is given to alignment with the EUSAIR action plan (see <https://www.adriatic-ionician.eu/library/>) and EUSAIR flagships (see <https://www.adriatic-ionician.eu/2020/06/12/eusair-flagships-all-summed-up/> and <https://etceusair-network.eu/data>), which will be monitored throughout the development process. The strategic project partners shall clearly outline how their activities are going to be followed up on within the EUSAIR and with the EUSAIR stakeholders, as well as explain what actions may contribute to the implementation of the EUSAIR flagship projects and how they intend to promote these actions to the EUSAIR actors.

In addition, during the development phase, pillar coordinators shall be involved to further specify the contribution, in relation to the specificities of the programme area, which is smaller than the EUSAIR area, and in relation to the type of actions and beneficiaries and budget of the strategic projects.

## CAPITALISATION AND SYNERGIES

Project partners shall duly consider the results of projects financed in the same topic by the 2014-2020 Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro programme, especially those of the Thematic Projects and they are encouraged to capitalise on them, as far as possible.

In addition, synergies with National and Regional Operational Programmes and with other Interreg programmes, such as ADRION, shall be planned, pursued and reported throughout the project life.

For further reference on capitalisation see <https://www.interact-eu.net/download/file/21102>  
<https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/lacoesione/le-politiche-di-coesione-in-italia-2014-2020/la-cooperazione-territoriale-europea/la-capitalizzazione/>

For Interreg projects data see <https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/cte/smart-cte/> <https://keep.eu/>.

## 2. PROJECT PARTNERS

The following types of partners, according to their legal status, are eligible for funding:

- Public bodies;
- Bodies governed by public law<sup>1</sup>.

Private non-profit organisations are not eligible in the strategic projects.

### Partnerships

The heads of national delegations nominated core partners, who also involved their departments and other competent public bodies in project development, who are the addressees of this public notice:

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2014/24/EU Article 2 (4) 'bodies governed by public law' means bodies that have all of the following characteristics: (a) they are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character; (b) they have legal personality; and (c) they are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law

Project	Organisation of the partner	
1.1	AL	Ministry of Tourism and Environment
	IT	Molise Region- Service for the competitiveness of productive systems
	IT	Puglia Region – Department of Tourism, Economy of Culture and Territorial Valorization - Department of Economic Development – Youth Policies
	ME	Ministry of Culture and Media
	ME	National Touristic Organization
2.1	AL	National Agency for Civil Protection
	IT	Molise Region - First Department (Presidency) - Fourth Department (Governance of Territories)
	IT	Puglia Region - Department of Civil Protection Associated: Section of Water Resource + National Department of Civil Protection
	IT	Acquedotto Pugliese SpA (body governed by public law)
	ME	Ministry of Interior - Dir for Protection and Rescue
	ME	LLLC “Regional waterworks for Montenegrin coast”
3.1	AL	Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
	AL	Port of Durres
	AL	Institute of Transports (associated)
	IT	Molise Region - First Department - Fourth Department
	IT	Puglia Region - Department of Mobility
	IT	Regional Strategic Agency for the eco-sustainable development of the territory – ASSET Puglia Region
	IT	Port Authority of the Southern Adriatic (SASPA)
	ME	Ministry of Capital Investments
	ME	Port of Bar
4.1	AL	SASPAC
	IT	Puglia Region - Department of labour market policies, education, training
	IT	Molise Region - First Department - Fourth Department - Service for the competitiveness of productive systems
	ME	University of Montenegro - Institute for Marine Biology
	ME	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
5.1	AL	SASPAC
	AL	Ministry of State for Service Standardization
	IT	Molise Region - First department - Service for the competitiveness of productive systems
	IT	Puglia Region - Department of Economic Development – Digital Transition
	ME	Ministry of Finance
	ME	Ministry of European Affairs
	ME	Ministry of finance and social welfare

In addition to or in replacement of the Core Partners identified by the Heads of National Delegations, **additional public and public law partners** may be involved by the identified core partners, in accordance with the actions and activities to be carried out. The revised list shall be preliminary approved by the MC, through a short written procedure.

Each partner shall substantially contribute to the achievement of project objective, with sufficient funds allocation, therefore, as a general rule for each project the **total number of partners should not exceed ten (10)** including the Lead Partner. In duly justified cases, more partners may be admitted.

Projects can also have associated partners, taking part to the activities without receiving financing.

In compliance with article 23 (5) of the ETC Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, and on the basis of a proven management capacity of the partner, demonstrated e.g. through previous project management experiences, the **project partners shall appoint a Lead Partner**, who bear all tasks and responsibilities set out in article 26 of the ETC Regulation.

In compliance with art. 12 of the Directive 2014/24/EU and with the related provisions in the National Legislations<sup>2</sup>, for operational needs and an increased efficiency during project implementation, project partners may implement specific project activities through delegated public or public law bodies, which act as if they were operational branches of the project partner itself. In these cases, exclusively the project partner keeps the full responsibility and liabilities towards the Managing Authority and the other partners, as well as the reporting obligations.

### 3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

The overall financial allocation for the 5 priority axes is as follows:

Priority	IPA Contribution	National Co-financing	Total
<b>1 Smart</b>	3.959.520,00	840.480,00	4.800.000,00
<b>2 Green</b>	3.959.520,00	840.480,00	4.800.000,00
<b>3 Connected</b>	4.949.400,00	1.050.600,00	6.000.000,00
<b>4 Social</b>	3.959.520,00	840.480,00	4.800.000,00
<b>5 Governance</b>	3.712.050,00	787.950,00	4.500.000,00
<b>TOTAL</b>	20.540.010,00	4.359.990,00	24.900.000,00

The final project budget shall be calculated by the partners according to a precise cost estimation of the activities planned, without exceeding the financial allocation.

#### Co-financing

Even though, at programme level the IPA co-financing rate is 82,49%, following rates are applicable<sup>3</sup>:

<sup>2</sup> In Italy, Art. 5 and 192 of Decreto legislativo 18/04/2016 no. 50 (disciplina affidamenti in house, Codice dei contratti pubblici) and Art. 15 of Law 241/1990 (Accordi fra pubbliche amministrazioni).

<sup>3</sup> Consequently, to make sure that sufficient IPA funds are available in the MA account, projects with an unbalanced share of funds between IPA countries and the Member State may only be approved under the condition that the financial balance (approximately 50% IPA countries and 50% Member State) is restored.

- **For Italian partners 80%;**
- **For Albanian & Montenegrin partners 85%.**

The Italian national co-financing is guaranteed to all public and private partners, in compliance with the decision Delibera CIPESS n. 78/2021.

Albanian and Montenegrin partners shall provide the 15% national co-financing at project level.

### **Pre-financing**

Project lead partners are entitled to a **pre-financing of 30% of the IPA contribution**, upon signature of subsidy contract, and they shall transfer the related quota to their project partners. Offset of the pre-financing occurs through the retention of 40% of the IPA amount requested in each joint progress report, until the total amount of pre-financing is completely offset, or not later than the second-last joint project report, in which the total remaining pre-financing shall be completely offset.

According to the reimbursement principle, the partners shall have financial capacity to advance all costs, which shall be reimbursed upon the foreseen verifications.

### **Over-budget**

With the aim of mitigating the de-commitment risk, the beneficiaries of Strategic Projects shall commit to book in the budgets of their organisations own national/regional funds **for an additional 15% of the total partner budget** (over-budget), as well as the beneficiaries have the right to report over-budget expenditures towards the end of the project implementation, in compliance with the subsidy contract, partnership agreement and programme manual procedure. Over-budget is understood as an amount related to operations or part thereof, which may be budgeted and reported, even though not available in the programme allocation for the specific priority axis. This amount is expected to become available in the future, because of underspending and savings, which usually occur at closure of the operations and of the programme. The subsidy contract and corresponding partnership agreement shall regulate the overbudget, specifying that the amount in overbudget must be covered with other funds, in case savings are not available at programme closure.

Consequently, the additional activities/outputs in overbudget must be

- coherent, suitable and functionally contributing to reaching the global project objective,
- eligible and compliant with all programme rules, in particular their expenditures must not be financed by other EU programmes (double-financing), and not part of a completed operation,
- validated by the national controllers,
- advanced /mature at the time of the inclusion into the project,
- clearly identified in separate reporting, as they will not be reimbursed immediately, but only at programme closure, when savings become certain.

At programme closure, the Managing Authority de-commits the unspent funds from the projects in underspending and commit the overbudget amounts in relation and in proportion to the additionally budgeted and reported amounts by strategic project partners. The Managing Authority may not assume responsibility for amounts, which do not become available at programme closure.

### **Eligibility rules**

Detailed eligibility rules for the expenditures are specified in the programme manual fact sheet, published at <https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/programme/south-adriatic-2021-27/south-adriatic-manual> .

## 4. PROJECT DURATION

The total duration shall not exceed **60 months** and the project end date shall not be set beyond **31 December 2027**. In duly justified cases, the Managing Authority may approve project extensions of up to 12 months with information to the Monitoring Committee. Further extensions are subject to approval by the Monitoring Committee.

## 5. PROJECT PREPARATION AND CLOSURE

As set out in Annex 02 methodology, in addition to the assistance of the Seed Facility, project partners' travel and meeting costs, incurred for project development until the start date of the project, are covered by the specific Simplified Cost Option, under condition that the project is approved with the partner concerned.

The costs for closing the project, incurred after the end date of the project, shall be covered by the closure lump sum, as set out in the Factsheet on Simplified Cost Options of the Programme Manual.

## 6. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE

The project development procedure is described in annex 02 of the adopted Programme document at:

<https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/programme/south-adriatic-2021-27/south-adriatic-docs>

## 7. SELECTION CRITERIA AND FUNDING DECISION

At the end of the development of the Application Form, and before the approval by the MC, the Joint Secretariat assesses if the projects fulfil following Programme selection criteria, fully or if specific conditions must be set to fulfil the specific criteria<sup>4</sup>:

### 1. Strategic criteria

#### 1.1. Strategic relevance

Criteria	Fully fulfilled (tick if applicable)	Fulfilled with conditions (listed as proposal to MC)
The project addresses common territorial challenges of the programme or a joint asset of the programme area - there is a real need for the project (well justified, reasonable, well explained). – AF C.2.1 and C.2.2		
The project clearly contributes to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU / national / regional). – AF C.2.5		
The project overall objective clearly contributes to the achievement of the programme priority specific objective. – AF C.1		
<b>The implementation of effective cross-border activities (no mirroring) is clearly demonstrated.</b> The importance of cooperation beyond borders for the topic addressed is clearly demonstrated. The results cannot (or only to some extent)		

<sup>4</sup> The criteria below were selected according to the harmonised implementation tool of the Interact programme, thus validated at European level by a group of Managing Authorities of Interreg programmes.

be achieved without cooperation – AF C.2.3		
<b>A clear benefit from cooperating for all the involved project partners and both sides of the maritime border.</b> There is a clear benefit from cooperating for the project partners / target groups / project area / programme area. – AF C.2.3		

### 1.2. Strategic partnerships

Criteria	Fully fulfilled (tick if applicable)	Fulfilled with conditions (listed as proposal to MC)
The project involves the relevant actors needed to address the territorial challenge/joint asset and the objectives specified. – AF C.3		
With respect to the project's objectives the project partnership: – AF C.3 o is balanced with respect to the levels, sectors, territory o consists of partners that complement each other.		

### 1.3. Strategic capitalisation

Criteria	Fully fulfilled (tick if applicable)	Fulfilled with conditions (listed as proposal to MC)
The project makes use of available knowledge and builds on existing results and practices. – AF C.2.7		
The project tries to avoid overlaps and replications; there is evolution of ideas. The project demonstrates new solutions that go beyond the existing practice in the sector/programme area/participating countries or adapts and implements already developed solutions. – AF C.2.2		

## 2. Operational criteria

### 2.1. Operational relevance

Criteria	Fully fulfilled (tick if applicable)	Fulfilled with conditions (listed as proposal to MC)
Project outputs are durable (the proposal is expected to provide a significant and durable contribution to solving the challenges targeted) – if not, it is justified. The project outputs going to be further used and the sustainability ensured once the project has been finalised. If applicable, the project envisages durability of relevant project outputs – AF C.8.2		
The project outputs clearly link to programme output indicators and their contribution to programme targets is sufficient. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages		
Project's contribution to programme result indicators is realistic and sufficient. – AF C.5		
The communication objectives are relevant and are expected to contribute to project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Objectives in work packages		
Communication activities (and deliverables) are appropriate to reach the relevant target groups and stakeholders. – AF C.4 Activities and deliverables in work packages		



The project clearly and consistently contributes to specified EUSAIR macroregional Strategy objectives and actions (Specific programme criteria)		
The project objective and activities are explicitly foreseen in the EUSAIR action plan or in the EUSAIR flagship, the project clearly outlines how these activities are going to be followed up on within the EUSAIR (Specific programme criteria)		
The project makes a positive contribution to programme horizontal principle equality between men and women, to equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as set by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. The project demonstrates to apply the horizontal principles set out in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR) – AF C.7.6		
The project makes a positive contribution to programme horizontal principle sustainable development. The project demonstrates to make a positive contribution to sustainable development and to adopt measures, which potentially reduce negative environmental impacts, as well as it excludes measures listed in annex I and II of the directive no. 2011/92/EU or requiring additional environmental assessment AF C7.6		
The project clearly and consistently described how synergies and complementarities with other programmes and funding are ensured, especially transnational, national-regional programmes and EU Commission programmes. (Specific programme criteria)		
The maritime and local dimensions are clearly addressed through the project strategy. (Specific programme criteria)		
The project is mature, allowing its smooth realization (i.e. stage of completion of the administrative procedures, etc.) (Specific programme criteria)		
The project demonstrates to build up adequate links at governance level, as to ensure sustainability and capitalisation of results. (Specific programme criteria)		

## 2.2. Partners capacities

Criteria	Fully fulfilled (tick if applicable)	Fulfilled with conditions (listed as proposal to MC)
Partner organisations have proven experience and competence in the thematic field concerned, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the project (financial, human resources, etc.) – AF B.1.6		
All partners play a defined role in the partnership and the territory benefits from this cooperation. – AF C.3		
Distribution of tasks among partners is appropriate (e.g. sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with partners' role in the project, etc.). – AF C.4 Activities in work packages		
For 2014-2020 Lead Partners: The 2014-2020 Lead Partner demonstrated competency in managing EU funded projects and ensured adequate measures for management support. (Specific programme criteria)		
For 2014-2020 Project Partners: Project partners demonstrated that they efficiently implemented project activities (Specific programme criteria)		

## 2.3. Intervention logic

Criteria	Fully fulfilled (tick if applicable)	Fulfilled with conditions (listed as proposal to MC)

Project specific objectives are specific, realistic and achievable. – AF C.4 Specific objectives in work packages		
Proposed project outputs are needed to achieve project specific objectives. – AF C.4 Output tables in work packages		
Project outputs and results that contribute to programme indicators are realistic (it is possible to achieve them with given resources – i.e. time, partners, budget - and they are realistic based on the quantification provided). – AF C.4, C.5, C.6, D		
Project main outputs are applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership (transferability) – if not, it is justified. – AF C.8.3		
Proposed activities and deliverables are relevant and lead to planned outputs and results. – AF C.4, C.5		
Time plan is realistic. – AF C.6		
Activities, deliverables and outputs are in a logical time-sequence. – AF C.6		

## 2.4. Finance

Criteria	Fully fulfilled (tick if applicable)	Fulfilled with conditions (listed as proposal to MC)
The importance of investments and their cross-border relevance is demonstrated to reach project objectives (if applicable). – AF C.4 Investments		
The budget allocated to staff and external expertise is in line with the project content and the costs are realistic. – AF D.2 & E.3		
Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned to ensure project implementation. – AF D.2 & E.3		
The need for engaging external expertise is justified and the costs seem realistic. – AF E.3		
Financial allocation per cost category is in line with the work plan. – AF D.2 & E.3		
If applicable, the distribution of the budget per period is in line with the work plan. – AF D.4		
The application of lump sums and unit costs is appropriate and in line with the programme rules. – AF D.2 & E.3		
The available information in the budget is transparent and sufficient. On that basis, the project budget appears proportionate to the proposed work plan, project outputs and project's contribution to programme indicators aimed for. – AF D.2 & E.3		
Sufficient and reasonable resources are planned for investments and equipment purchases (if applicable) and their costs are realistic. – AF D.2 & E.3		

Based on the outcomes of this assessment and any additional specific conditions, which the MC may decide to apply to strategic projects, the MC makes the funding decision. Consequently, a negotiation phase may be open, where the JS/MA and the LP optimize project planning, activities and budgets.

## 8. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROCEDURE

According to the Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme, responsibility for the administrative procedures of this notice lays on Puglia Region, in the person of the Director of the Managing Authority Office.