

Frequently Asked Questions

Call for Standard Project Proposals

Please note that this document is issued by the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat of the Interreg IPA South Adriatic on behalf of the participating countries, it is provided only for information purposes.

It is published at

<https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/index.php/programme/south-adriatic-2021-27/south-adriatic-calls>, to assist potential project applicants and it only intends to provide clarification on the text of the Call.

For further questions contact js@southadriatic.eu.

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GENERAL

q Can we count on the extension of the deadline for the submission of the project proposal, considering that during summer it will be difficult to involve other partners?

a As decided by the Monitoring Committee of the Programme and set out in the call, the JEMS system is set to be closed on 6 September 2024 at 11:59, after that no proposal may be submitted. We advise applicants to use the available months efficiently. Modified with MC written procedure n.8 with call closure on 30 September 2024 at 11.59

q. Is there a maximum no. of project proposals to be approved? And to be approved per organisation?

a. No, there is neither a maximum no. of proposals per organisation to be approved, nor in total, but up to the maximum amount of funds allocated in the priority axis. i.e. the no. of projects approved for funding depends on the total amount requested by the projects at the top of the ranking list, compared to the amounts allocated to each priority axis.

q. With reference to the quality assessment - partnership criteria, could you better explain the criteria B4 and B5?

a. The mentioned criteria will be assessed by the JS in accordance to the relevance of the partners involved within the project proposal. Specifically, if a partner was added to the partnership without any or with very limited relevance in relation to the objectives, results and activities planned, the maximum score for this criteria cannot be granted.

q. What are the key annexes to be uploaded?

a. Please check the text of the call announcement and pay attention to the signed partners' declaration. If the Lead Partner declaration is not correctly signed and uploaded, the project is automatically rejected.

q. Can we understand this requirement "For partners, who participated already in 2014-2020 calls and who succeeded in the eligibility check, a declaration that the legal Statute / or legal acts have not substantially changed, compared to the version previously submitted to the program.", as applicable also to partners, who participated in the 2021-2027 first call for SSP proposals or strategic notice?

a, Yes, it can be interpreted analogically applicable also for the 2021-2027 calls, as this provision aims at reducing the administrative burdens for beneficiaries, in compliance with the rationale of the EU Regulations.

q. Co-financing Declaration: In the declaration to be signed by the Lead Partner (LP) and by each partner at point "2b) Sources of contribution for co-financing", do we have to report the amount of co-financing?

a. In table 2b the indication of the source of national co-financing (if Public or Private) and the confirmation of percentage (and/or the amount), which shall be at least 20% for IT and 15% for AL and ME, but it might be even higher.

q. Where can we find information and register for the open days?

a. At:

<https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/index.php/call-for-standard-project-proposals-open-days-10-17-31-july-2024>

q. How shall we fill in the partner and lead partner declarations in relation to the co-financing table?

a. Indicate the origin of the co-financing, which is for all Italian partners the FdR (you may indicate percentage 20%), for Albanian and Montenegrin partners own co-financing (you may indicate percentage 15%).

PROJECT CONTENT (planning, strategy, indicators)

q. Is a project focused on zootechnical biodiversity relevant to this call? Specifically on the biodiversity of small ruminants, by studying biochemical and hematological parameters, milk quality characteristics, etc.? And the circular bioeconomy using industrial waste, which is another topic we could include in the proposal? Should these two topics be merged into one proposal, or can the proposal focus on only one of these topics?

a. Specific objective 2.2 focuses on biodiversity, therefore topics related to this are relevant. Please note that circular economy was not selected by the Programme as a specific objective, but activities related also to circular economy are possible, if functional to the achievement of the selected specific objective of the programme. We advise applicants to consult the roadmap, which provides a clear indication of the themes, topics and actions supported in the South Adriatic, which may be found at this link:

<https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2024-04/ITALME%20Roadmap%20vs%20South%20Adriatic%20programme-2.pdf>

q. How many work packages shall we include as a maximum within the workplan?

a. The JEMS system gives the possibility to add 5 WPs as a maximum. Nonetheless, in order to avoid logic fragmentation and overlapping of project specific objectives/ outputs, we recommend the identification of up to 3 WPs.

q. Is it possible to have one WP without outputs? Is it possible to achieve two RCOs through a single work package? Is it possible to have, in the same project, outputs referring to 2 different programme output indicators? Is there a Maximum number for Results and Output indicators?

a. In accordance with the Programme intervention logic, it is possible, as the activities and deliverables described in a WP without outputs may contribute to achieving outputs specified in other WPs (please specify this aspect).

Exceptionally, it might also be possible to have big WPs which lead to more than one RCO. Basically, each programme S.O. foresees 2 types of output indicator. Therefore, it could be possible to reach both of them, but it could not be realistic or feasible during the project lifetime. Be aware that any type of RCO has only one corresponding RCR. With reference to the target value for results and outputs indicators, we are required to comply with the methodology applied during programming (e.g. for joint solutions and plans, one per project was assumed). Please check the F.S. 1.1 of the SA programme Manual

q. Do you foresee limitations for infrastructural intervention?

a. Basically, the Programme allows small scale infrastructural works, only if they are functionally necessary to achieve the project objectives and if their cross-border dimension is ensured during the project life and at project closure (such as e.g. partners using it jointly for cross-border activities, etc.). Please take care of the maturity of any work/ investment foreseen, in accordance with the public commitment rules, the necessary authorisations, the public procurement timeline etc.. For further details check the F.S. 4.10 of the SA programme manual.

q. Are there some limitations to foresee activities outside the eligible area?

a. It is allowed to foresee activities outside the eligible area, if beneficial and necessary to achieve the project objectives, within the limits defined by the article 37 of Reg EU 1059/2021. In any case the JS shall assess the relevance and consistency of this typology of actions too for the benefit of the project objective and of the programme ones.

q. Are training activities possible only within proposals under the S.O. 4.1 Skills?

a. No. Basically training actions could be foreseen in any S.O. Take care to choose carefully the correct S.O. in line with your Project proposal objective/output/result

q. Although no WP Management is foreseen, are there mandatory activities / deliverables to be included (such as SC meetings) in the Work Packages?

a. No, it is up to you to provide an efficient description of management actions in the section C7 of the Application form, with related deliverables only if relevant. In any case, an adequate organisation of the partnership, such as through Steering Committee, is a good practice in any Interreg project. Please avoid filling in management activities/deliverables in the WPs, unless they are functional to reach the project specific objective/output foreseen in the single WP.

q. As indicated in the offline AF, each activity must have an activity code in its title. For management and/or communication activities, which code must be entered?

a. This coding of activities is intended to aggregate statistical historical data for programme evaluation and communication purposes. Therefore, we propose to use the most suitable code, such as e.g. 1) Public services (PSe) or 6) Joint models / processes (JMP) or 7) Capacity building / training (CBT). Check Fact Sheet 1.1. of the manual for the precise definition.

q. About project management, it's clear that we have to describe it not in thematic Work Packages (WPs) but in dedicated paragraphs. Do you confirm that the related costs have to be included and described in the budget at the activity/product description level, without specifying WP?

a. Yes, you will describe in the budget the management actions, without specifying any WP. On the contrary, communication activities shall be included in every thematic work package. For example in a project a "WP

Beach cleaning days" includes also 1 activity "Managing beach cleaning days in 4 territories (JMP)" deliverable "joint beach cleaning day organisation plan" and activity "Beach cleaning days campaign (PSe)" deliverable "Paper posters, social media posts, media package design" and the related costs. Take care to ensure an easy understanding of the budget on the basis of the designed Workplan, since there is not an automatic link between WP and budget lines any more.

q. Do you suggest a small investment or Innovative experiment? How do they impact the assessment process and final score? For example pilot action.

a. Unlike the first call for small-scale capitalisation projects, this call encourages innovative solutions/processes, therefore pilot and innovative actions are welcome. The score granted to the innovative intervention depends on the nature, global objective and expected results of the entire project and on the coherence of the intervention with these.

q. Can the project address multiple priority axes or specific objectives?

a. No, the project must address only one specific objective, which must be the main focus of the project. If useful to reach the main result, other cross cutting activities can be foreseen.

q. Is there a limit to the number of activities to be included in each work package?

a. No. In any case a coherent and well structured workplan will be subject to a quality assessment.

q. Do we need to have a financial plan for each part of the project?

a. Every activities/investments etc. shall be accurately estimated, as to come to a realistic financial plan. According to these accurate estimations, total amounts per partner and per cost category should be entered.

q. If I take action in the development of an innovative experimental application as a digital collaborative platform, can I consider such a platform as project output (Joint developed solution) jointly developed to enhance the competitiveness of touristic MSMEs?

a. Please check the definitions in fact sheet 1.1. of the Programme Manual. It depends on the nature of the platform and on the specific objectives of the project. According to the programme intervention logic, to reach a project result and thus achieve the project specific objective, you need a specific global output (e.g. a joint solution), for which you need several project activities, which are documented through specific deliverables.

q. The character limits for paragraphs in the JEMS platform differ from those in the offline application form. For instance, the maximum character count for one activity is 1000 in the offline form but 5000 in the platform. How should we proceed?

a. Please respect the maximum character limit of the offline application form, instead of what is indicated in the JeMS, as to facilitate the project assessment and ensure high quality descriptions in the application form.

q. Is it correct to suppose that each joint action plan should result from a joint strategy so that a project is expected to deliver both a strategy and the connected action plan? In the abovementioned case: should they be indicated as separate outputs or as a unique output "package"? Is it also possible to deliver - i.e. - a strategy without a subsequent action plan? Is it correct to suppose that each joint action plan should result from a joint strategy so that a project is expected to deliver both a strategy and the connected action

plan? In the abovementioned case: should they be indicated as separate outputs or as a unique output "package"? Is it also possible to deliver - i.e. - a strategy without a subsequent action plan?

a. If in a project you plan to deliver both a joint strategy and a joint plan, you may also consider both as one output, as they are strictly inter-connected and they result from many different activities, in compliance with the methodology adopted during programming. You may also deliver one strategy without a subsequent action plan, which e.g. may be developed in follow-up actions agreed within the strategy itself, even though the programme encourages an orientation to concrete activities. In general, the methodology adopted assumes that one global output per project is the evidence of many project activities implemented and documented in single deliverables. In any case, please check carefully the F.S. 1.1 of the SA Programme Manual

q. How is the target value fixed for an output indicator? Are there standard methodologies? In which way this value affects the global project evaluation and on the outputs/results reporting?

a. The South Adriatic Programme set a methodology for the selected indicators (cfr. Annex 01 of the Programme framework), as you can find listed in the F.S. 1.1 of the SA programme manual. In accordance with this methodology, you should fix your project indicators with a feasible target value to be reached. In F.S. 1.1 you may also find for each indicator how the target value was calculated per project, during programming, which should be used as a reference for your project too. The target reached will be monitored and checked, as stated in the subsidy contract and in the F.S. 4.7 of the programme manual.

q. Where shall we include communication and project management costs and deliverables?

a. All contents explaining general communication and project management information can be filled in the related sections of the AF (ie. C.7. sections) including a list of deliverables to be produced if any. The costs can be easily filled in the correct expenditure categories, explaining what it refers to.

PARTNERSHIP (partner eligibility, statements)

q Can we have a list of NGOs from other countries? How can we find suitable partners?

a Please check our website, where you will find the list of operations and partners of both the 2014-2020 Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro and the 2021-2027 Interreg South Adriatic. You can also use our partner search tool and www.keep.eu (database of all Interreg project partners).

q How is the balance between Italian and IPA partners (Albanian and Montenegrin) applied?

a As the EU Commission reimburses the MA with a 82,49% rate, and the MA reimburses Italian partners with a 80% rate and Albanian and Montenegrin partners with a 85% rate, to avoid that IPA funds are missing in the programme account, we need balanced partner budget shares, i.e. approximately 50% IT and 50% AL / ME budget. This is considered as an average on all projects.

Example: Project report 100€, MA claims them to EC, which reimburses € 82,49. In same report, IT PPs claim 51 € and receive 40,80 € from MA, AL+ME PPs claim 49 € and receive 41,65 €, i.e. MA pays to PPs 82,45 €, but receives from EC 82,49 €.

q Are NGOs eligible? What kind of registration is acceptable?

a Yes, if they have been registered 24 months before the launch of the call, according to National rules (date of registration in the registers, date of the establishment act, etc.).

q Are agencies of the United Nations eligible? An Intergovernmental / International Organization, more specifically a United Nations agency, can you confirm the organization is eligible to participate as a partner? If not, please clearly point out (indicating the legal supporting documents/articles) the reasons for the non-eligibility of the organization. Which additional documents/agreements should be signed/provided to be fully compliant with the eligibility rules?

a Given that Interreg Operations by their nature are not strictly addressed to international organizations, according to the text of the Standard Call and the Programme Manual (Factsheet 4.10), International organizations can be eligible only if they act under the national law of an EU Member State and respect these three conditions:

- (a) Participation in the project through an operative seat located in one of the Programme regions; and
- (b) Explicit acceptance of all requirements deriving from the EU Treaty and the regulations applicable in the framework of the regions of the Programme; and
- (c) In the funding decision, the Monitoring Committee delegation of the Country of the organisation does not decline the subsidiary liability set out in article 52 (3) of the ETC Reg. (EU) 2021/1059.

Therefore: For being eligible, the International Organisation shall have the legal seat or an operational seat (i.e. having legal capacity, the legal representative, operational staff and office) in Italy, Albania or Montenegro. They shall also be in the position and accept to apply the EU and national rules (on the basis of Reg. (EU) 2021/1060 and 2021/1059), including also the National Courts' jurisdiction, instead of their rules, especially for staff and public procurement (in Italy Codice degli Appalti, Albania and Montenegro the rules specified for IPA countries in the financing agreement, i.e. the EU Financial Regulation and the use of PRAG is recommended) and the countries (represented by the respective Monitoring Committee member) where these are located shall accept to be subsidiary liable for these organisations, in case of irregularities and recoveries.

q Are social partners like business support organisations, chambers of commerce etc. eligible?

a Yes, if they are public bodies, bodies governed by public law and non-profit, and if they are eligible according to the Programme and Call eligible rules.

q. What is the minimum number of partners per country? Is there a maximum number of partners from each territory?

a. The Interreg Regulation (EU Reg. 2021/1059) provides for at least one partner from a Member State (Italy) and one from the IPA countries (Albania or Montenegro) for an operation to be eligible, however, please note that up to 10 additional points will be scored to projects having relevant partners from all territories, i.e. Regions Puglia and Molise, Albania and Montenegro.

q. Can private companies be eligible?

a. No. Only public bodies, bodies governed by public law and private non-profit organisations are eligible. Private profit undertaking may be target groups of activities, especially in Specific Objective 1.1., including the new possibility to foresee indirect aid to SMEs granted by project partners, in compliance with article 20a of the GBER Regulation, i.e. up to 22.000 per SME.

q. Is a municipality eligible? Given that they have limited capacities, will they receive a lower score?

a. Yes, public local authorities like municipalities are eligible. Please check the quality assessment criteria, which specify how the financial and management capacity of small organisations is checked by the National Delegations. Participation of newcomers is welcome, but the JS and the National Delegations will assess their capacity to manage complex projects on the basis of the description of the previous experiences, organisational/administrative setting and plans to ensure sufficient capacity from the project start (check criteria B.1.2 “Each partner can count on a team with sufficient competences and/or on a dedicated unit inside the organization”).

q. Are research institutions also eligible?

a. Provided that the research institution meets the Programme eligibility requirements (public, governed by public law or no-profit, legal seat or registered office / operating office in the eligible area having full power to operate with complete autonomy from the legal seat) and the requirements provided by art. 2 (83) of the Reg. (EU) 651/2014, they are eligible.

q. Is the limitation of two project proposals per S.O. for the universities also applicable to research institutions?

a. No it is not possible. The call provides this possibility only for universities. Please note that "university/research" in slide 8 of the presentation of the call, published on our website, specifies that instead of the statutory "educational" activities of universities, university's activities related to "research" are essential to increase innovation, which was the objective of the Monitoring Committee, while extending the possibility only for universities. Please also note that the limitation of project proposals for organisations in each specific objective has the rationale to increase strategic approaches, i.e. organisations focus on few but strategic project proposals, instead of submitting proposals, which are less strategic and may not be successfully implemented by the organisations. The programme bodies strongly believe that 7 project proposals for an organisation are not a too strict limitation either. Even universities are encouraged to limit the project proposals to only those, which are really strategic for them and thus to coordinate their participation in the call. Finally, the extension for universities is a special derogation from the general rule provided by the Monitoring Committee, which may not be extended to further typologies of partners, as this will lead to an unlawful discrimination towards all other types of bodies.

q. We are an Inter-University Consortium. I'm asking to understand if the limit of one proposal per axis could be applied to us too, as we are a consortium of University and the University is admitted to two proposal submission per axis.

a. Only universities are exempted from the general rule of one project proposal per organisation per specific objective.

q. Is there a limitation related to the number of applications in which one organisation may participate as an associated partner?

a. Up to one associated partner organisation per project partner is admissible, but there is no maximum no. of applications as associated partner per organisation.

q. Is an organisation with legal seat in another Italian Region, but with operational seat in Puglia-Molise eligible?

a. Lead partners shall have a legal seat or branch offices with full legal and administrative capacity (check call text) in the programme area (Puglia, Molise, Albania or Montenegro), while the project partners may also have seat in another Italian region, if their participation and activities are beneficial for the programme area.

q. With reference to the Template "SA_PROJECT_PARTNER_DECLARATION_Standard_May_2024" seems to have a typo at page 4 where it mentions "1. Lead Partner's declaration about double funding and revenues", can this be adjusted by applicants or a new template will be provided?

a. Yes, it is a clerical error.

q. Call ToR suggests setting a budget balance of approx. 50% IPA countries and 50% Member states; is this confirmed even if the project includes more PPs from IPA countries than Member states (or vice versa) or in such cases financial balance among PPs prevails?

a As specified in a previous question (see above), we need balanced partner budget shares, i.e. approximately 50% IT and 50% AL / ME budget. This is necessary at programme level, thus as an average on all projects, therefore minor deviations for single projects are possible.

q. One organisation can include one associated partner, right? Is there a rule regulating a number of applications (per SO or in general) in which one institution can be included as an associated partner? Can we include two associated partners then? Can Confederazione italiana Armatori be an associated partner located outside the programme area? Can the associated partner be a private company? Can the associated partner be a local authority that is a partner in other proposals?

a. The rule is maximum one associated partner per partner. The limitation on the no. of project proposals per organisation does NOT apply to associated partners. The same eligibility criteria as project partners apply to associated partners, therefore private profit bodies are not eligible, whilst local public bodies, as well as bodies governed by public law and non-profit bodies, are eligible. The associated partner shall provide an added value, therefore it shall have useful competence to achieve project objectives. The costs related to associated partners' activities are included in the budget of the respective partner, whom it is associated with.

q. Are Italian National Ministries eligible?

a. As specified in the call, Project partners' (and Associated partners') headquarters or branch offices with full legal and administrative capacity shall be located in Albania, in Montenegro or, "in compliance with article 22, in any Italian regions other than Puglia and Molise, provided that the actions of these partners demonstrate a real and verifiable benefit for the regions of the programme area. Evidence shall be provided by the partners with the application form".

q. We, a group of established researchers from prestigious European Universities, have opened a Non-for-profit organization in March 2024. Does this hinder our possibility to participate in or form a consortium for the call?

a. Yes, only non-profit organizations, which are operational and registered at least in the last 24 months before the publication of the call, are eligible.

q. In case of grants to SMEs in compliance with the GBER, in the field "motivation" of the State Aid section of the Partner Declaration, shall we mention the grants? Even though the partner is not an undertaking and does not carry out market-oriented activities?

a. With this call, the Programme introduced the possibility to apply indirect aid (aid provided by the Programme beneficiaries, i.e. project partners / applicants), while applying article 20a of the GBER. This allows partners to grant aid to SMEs within art. 20a limitations and the conditions set out in the programme manual (e.g. transparent, non-discriminatory procedure, etc.). Even though the programme does not provide direct aid to the partner, the indirect aid is provided by the partner to SMEs (target groups), and thus it needs to be described in the related sections, while specifying the application of art. 20a.

q. What are the criteria for selecting partners from academia, and how can we demonstrate our capacity to contribute to cross-border cooperation projects?

a. While the call specified assessment criteria for the partners, there are no specific quality criteria for selecting universities or other academic institutions (please, see the relevant section of the call, i.e. section 8). Partners relevance, capacity and previous experience must be duly described in the Application Form (check the guideline provided into the offline Application Form)

q. Are there any specific lead partners or consortia currently seeking partners with expertise in air quality research and monitoring for the ongoing Call for Standard Project Proposals?

a. Please use the dedicated partner search tool in the Programme website at

<https://forms.gle/vwv7sv2GdjGNm2Ht6> and at

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2024-07/Partner_Search_STD_CALL%20%2005.07.2024.xlsx

or check 2014-2020 partners list at:

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2023-05/List_of_Operations_IT_AL_ME_10.05.2023.xlsx

or 2021-2027 partners list at

https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/sites/default/files/2024-05/Interreg_IPA_South_AdriaticVI-A_art_49_transparency_20240516.xlsx

q. Is the legal status of Local Action Groups always body of governed by public law?

a. It depends on the legal status set out in the Statute and the LAG partners. Please note that only public bodies governed by public law and non-profit LAGs are eligible.

q. Is only one associate per partner eligible?

a. Correct.

q. Can we change the templates for declarations?

a. No, the content of the declarations is binding for partners.

ELIGIBILITY OF COSTS (selection procedure, public procurement, contracting)

q How is the flat rate 15% for Office and Administration O&A?

a On any staff cost reported by the partner, automatically a 15% flat rate is calculated for O&A. The items covered by O&A, which are listed in the regulation for O&A are exhaustive, therefore they may not be reported in other budget lines.

q. Are equipment and works eligible? What are the conditions?

a. They are eligible in compliance with the programme rules (see Manual). However, we advise applicants to pay attention that these shall be necessary and functional to achieving the project objective, the long time for contracting works and infrastructures, compared to the short duration of the projects, i.e. they shall demonstrate that plans are mature, as well as that the works and investments shall be for the benefit of the whole cross-border area, not exclusively for the single country or organisation. This means, they shall be used for project activities for the benefit of all partners during the project and also at project completion it should be clear how the cross-border benefit is kept.

q. Can we receive a pre-financing?

a. Yes, partners may request pre-financing for 20% of the IPA budget, which will be offset with the retention of 40% of each payment request. It should be fully offset within the fore-last reporting period. Private lead partners must provide to MA a financial guarantee from a bank/insurance, in order to obtain the pre-financing. (Example: 100 € IPA project budget, 20%, i.e. 20 € pre-financing. First report: 10 €, of which 60% i.e. 6 € are paid, i.e. in the project account 10 € + 6 € = 16 € remain).

q. Is social inclusion an eligible theme?

a. Yes, please check the text of the call and of the Programme especially in relation to Specific Objective 4.1 and 4.2

q. How are lump sums and flat rates verified? What kind of documentation is necessary?

a. Simplified cost options are verified in compliance with the methodology approved, i.e. all set conditions must be met. In particular, the focus of verification shifts from the real costs documentation to the reality of the output. The fact that real costs and documents like invoices, contracts, procurement are not subject to verification, does not mean that the SCOs will not be verified: E.g. the lump sum (LS) preparation costs is verified through the existence of an approved application form, the LS closure costs, the existence of the complete final report, the flat rate (FR) for travel and accommodation (T&A) is verified through the verification of staff costs (on which the FR is calculated) and of the travel activities precisely described in project reports, etc. Please check carefully the F.S. 4.10.1 of the SA programme manual

q. Can a private partner grant indirect vouchers to SMEs up to 22.000 € value, acc. art. 20a GBER?

a. In several judgments of the Court of Justice, the imputability to the State of the Aid granted through private undertakings was confirmed, i.e. even though the funds are granted by a private partner, it is still considered State Aid. Art. 20a GBER provides for an exemption for cooperation projects, which indeed covers all eligible partners, including private non-profit partners of the Interreg IPA South Adriatic. However, the Judgment of the Court of Justice France v Commission (Stardust), C-482/99, highlighted the real risk that State aid may be

granted through the undertakings in a non-transparent manner and in breach of the rules on State aid laid down by the Treaty. To avoid that, private partners are required to apply the same rules of public partners, i.e. in particular, as set out in chapter 11.6 of the eligibility rules of the programme, the National Controller shall verify the a) Evidence of an appropriate selection procedure carried out by the project partner, according to the fundamental principles of competition, equal treatment and non-discrimination, transparency and publicity, in compliance with EU, national or Programme rules. b) Contract or agreement between project partners and third parties laying down the activities to be carried out with a clear reference to the project and the Programme, indicating also, if applicable, information required by National Laws on transparency and control of public investments and traceability of financial flows and any necessary requirement provided by the EU or National Laws. c) Evidence of the payment of the grant by the project partner to the third party.

q. Can a partner grant indirect vouchers to NGOs up to 22.000 € value, acc. art. 20a GBER? Can you say something more about vouchers for private companies involved as beneficiaries of the project?

a. Yes it can. Private profit SMEs may not be involved as project partners, therefore they may not receive funds from the programme, but they may be involved as target groups, therefore they may benefit from partners' activities, especially in S.O. 1.1. One of the benefits could also include "vouchers", up to 22.000 € funding to deliver specified activities. Please check the requirements to provide vouchers in the programme manual, eligibility rules (Factsheets 4.10), i.e. a) Evidence of a non-discriminatory selection procedure b) Contract or agreement c) Evidence of the payment of the grant.

q. Can Private profit undertaking be target beneficiaries providing them little devices that are financed by project partners (Ex. water/energy smart meters) or little equipment or little furniture, especially in Specific Objective 1.1., in compliance with article 20a of the GBER Regulation, i.e. up to 22.000 per SME? If so, are they considered investments?

a. Small-Medium Enterprises may be target groups of project activities, especially in S.O. 1.1. Activities may include support through vouchers in compliance with article 20a, which may include a variety of forms of support. Please check the eligibility rules fact sheet, which specifies how these expenditures shall be reported and therefore also in which budget line.

q. Granting of vouchers by project partners up to 22.000 € to SMEs or NGOs (target groups) e.g. for pilot actions, shall also assure sustainability after the project end. Are profit / revenues for SMEs / NGOs after the project end therefore admissible?

a. The programme beneficiaries (project partners) are only public, public law and non-profit organizations, therefore any profit and revenues for the project partners are not compliant with the programme strategy. On the contrary, especially in P.A. 1, SMEs are supposed to be target groups and they shall benefit from the project activities, including from the vouchers. It is clear that SMEs are profit-making organisations and as such the benefit of the project activities may lead in the future to growth of the concerned SMEs. NGOs, instead, are non-profit organizations, therefore profit or net revenues are excluded as such.

q. In accordance with the simplification measures introduced within the programme framework, is it still possible to choose the real cost option for the staff costs?

a. Following the programme rules, the applicant has the opportunity to use 3 options for staff costs calculation and reporting: Real Cost, SSUC and 20% flat rate. We strongly suggest using the available SCOs in order to guarantee a simplification approach during project implementation.

q. Could you please provide more details on the Investments documentation? What is meant by "documentation", what do you expect to be uploaded in this section in case of investments?

The documentation to be uploaded in case of investment is:

- preliminary budget of the investment
- legal documents specifying any legal right under the real-estate law concerning the land and/or buildings (publicly owned) where the works will be carried out;

where applicable, necessary permissions or other preliminary relevant legal documents for the execution of the works, issued by the national/regional/local relevant authorities.

q. Could you please clarify if Software for digitalization of procedures would be eligible cost, and under which category?

a. It is eligible and if these are IT services for developing a software, it shall be included into External Experts and Services, if it is an IT licence to be purchased or leased, it shall be included into Equipment.

q. Is the real cost option for staff discouraged?

a. No it is not discouraged, the SCO is simply a great opportunity to be taken in due account. Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) are an innovative way of reimbursing grants and repayable assistance under the Cohesion Policy Funds. Instead of reimbursing "real costs", SCOs allow the reimbursement of expenditures according to predefined methods based on process, outputs or results. This significantly reduces the administrative burden for the beneficiaries and the risk of errors.

q. Due to the availability of different simplified cost options, can each partner within the same partnership freely choose the option that best suits their needs? Consequently, can multiple simplified cost options be used within a single partnership?

a. Yes, each partner can choose the option that best suits their own needs.

q. What are the requirements for investments after project closure?

a. In compliance with Article 71 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, investments, if any, may not be changed or relocated for the next five years.

q. Shall we consider net revenues?

a. Even though the CPR Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 does not regulate net revenues, the Interreg IPA South Adriatic does not support profit-making bodies and activities. Public, public law and non-profit beneficiaries of the Programme shall provide a real benefit to the citizens of the programme area, not a profit to single programme beneficiaries. For this reason, any net revenue should be either avoided or deducted from the budget if it occurs.

q. Can an equipment of a project partner be allocated to its associated partner for a pilot action?

a. Yes, but on the basis of an agreement, regulating ownership and use of the equipment, in which the ownership shall remain at the project partner, who contracted / paid for the equipment.

q. If we use the real staff cost mode can we use the budget for scholarships for bachelor's degree students? If we use the SCO, there is no need to 'prove' that a contractor has a contractual relationship with the beneficiary, so it means that the budget can be used either for a research contract, a scholarship, or any other type of contract that my administration will allow me. Is that correct?

a. For Real Costs: As the scholarships are for bachelor's degree students, it MAY NOT be "assimilated to salary payments and such a contract be considered as an employment document" (quote from F.S. 4.10), because the main purpose of the scholarship for undergraduates is to cover their living costs, instead of the remuneration for activities delivered by the student to the university, which may occur in case of researchers instead.

For SCOs: Please note that also in case of SCOs for staff, project partners shall provide evidence that they contracted persons to carry out specific activities, even though SCO verifications are focused on the reality of the output i.e. activity delivered to the project partner, instead of compliance with specific national rules.

Q. Given that the project foresees a pilot, would it be possible to make use, completely free of charge, of private infrastructures belonging to third parties (tourist docks) not included in the partnership to carry on the experimentation activities needed for the pilot? If yes, is it enough to clarify the availability by the third party in the narrative sections of the Application Form, or should a prior agreement be produced and attached in the JEMS portal?

A. You can clarify this issue in the narrative sections of the Application Form, while at same time providing sufficient elements for the project assessors to be in the position to positively assess the feasibility of the planned pilot action during project implementation and sustainability after project end. This means, you must explain in details the concrete measures you put in place such as e.g. while providing a draft agreement text between partner and the third parties, regulating use during and after project end (if not signed, explain in details also the timing for signing it), and/or through involvement of these third parties as associated partners.

q. 2 Italian partners from the same consortium would like to subcontract part of their activities to a non-profit Italian Research Foundation governed by public law. Is it possible that both or more partners from the same consortium subcontract activities to the same entity as external expertise? If yes, what is the maximum percentage of overall activities that can be subcontracted?

a. The programme does not allow for joint activities, i.e. if a partner carries out activities also for the benefit of other partners, each partner shall be responsible for its own public procurement / contract, as well as for the control and payment of the costs for these activities.

For Italian partners, the Italian Codice degli Appalti D.Lgs. 36/2023 is applicable, therefore the public procurement by the partner shall comply with all principles (including transparency, equal treatment) and the applicable provisions.

The programme does not foresee subcontracting, i.e. the beneficiaries (project partner) may or may not outsource specific activities through lawful public procurements (for costs reported under "external experts

and services”, “equipment”, “works”), still maintaining the overall responsibility towards the programme. If subcontracting is made within public procurements it shall comply with the applicable public procurement rules as well as in-house rules, where applicable.

q. Is the rate for Montenegro of Standard Scale of Unit Costs for Staff correct?

a. Please check the rate in the Jems, as it was recently updated. It is the result of a methodology based on statistical historical data, being verified by the audit.

q. What is the level of details to be provided for light infrastructural works, being small and functional to the project objectives?

a. The more detailed and the more accurate the executive plan, authorisations, ToRs of the future procurement for the works are, the better it is for assessing the maturity of these works. These documents may be uploaded in the annex section.

q. If we are two partners from Albania participating in the call, every Albanian partner has to put 15% of its own co-financing or the total of the 2 partners has to be equal to 15%?

a. Each partner shall co-finance the 15% of the total budget in charge. More specifically, they will claim 100% of the eligible expenditures and they will be reimbursed 85%.

JEMS (platform functionalities, procedures)

q. If an applicant already has an account in eMS is this account transferred to the JeMS (i.e. also the documents related to the eligibility)?

a. No. You should register again in the Jems as the programme and system is different

q. I already have an active account in Jems, shall I open a new account for the Standard Call?

a. No, you may use your account and you will find the new call (select apply).

q. Are there specific requirements for project acronyms in Jems? I.e., can the acronym include spaces and special characters (hyphens, dots, etc.) or not?

a. Basically there are no specific requirements for project acronyms, but we strongly suggest it to be simple and short, since it will be used for communication purposes in case of financing, therefore one single word is recommended.

q. Can we create more than one account (in case of more than one proposal) on behalf of the same organisation? If we are LP for more than one proposal but managed by different people can we create more than one account without any problems?

a. Yes you can.

q. How can we specify in Jems that Italian partners have a national co-financing of 20% and Albanian and Montenegrin of 15%?

a. You shall indicate the IPA contribution - cofinancing of 80% for Italian and 85% of all others.

COMMUNICATION (requirements, activities)

q. How can social media accounts be managed at project level? Is it foreseen a project website?

a. In order to avoid fragmentation and duplication of social media accounts during project implementation, NO project social accounts shall be created. The promotion of project activities will be guaranteed through the Programme Social Media Accounts, by appointing a project editor/project content manager, selected by the project. No project website shall be created. The programme website will host the project webpage with the main project contents, its news, activities, results and outputs

q. Is it mandatory that LP coordinates project external communication or this task can be covered by one of PPs?

a. The overall project communication activities may be led also by one project partner, but the LP shall ensure the sound technical and financial management of the project, including adequate project communication, as well as each partner shall ensure proper communication.

q. Are there mandatory communication activities /deliverables to be included in the application?

a. The communication activities depend on each project focus, since they are embedded in the thematic work packages. Nevertheless, as specified during the call info days, take care to foresee: a communication manager responsible for all project partners for whole project duration, a communication plan, creative and professional graphic design for project visual identity according the Programme visual one, content creator/social media manager/journalist/ social advertising, photographers/video makers with storytelling approach.