

**Interreg VI - B IPA Adriatic Ionian
Cooperation Programme 2021-2027
“IPA ADRION”
Announcement of the first call for proposals
for Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3**

1. Introduction

The Interreg VI-B IPA Adriatic Ionian Cooperation Programme 2021-2027 (hereinafter IPA ADRION) - is launching its first call for proposals devoted to Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 and invites all interested eligible applicants to submit their project proposals.

The IPA ADRION programme’s main objective is to address the shared Adriatic-Ionian region challenges as biodiversity safeguard, climatic changes, sustainable transport, through the implementation of innovative models and tools, *acting as a pivotal instrument for the identification of common solutions*, contributing thus to *make the region smarter and greener able to withstand future economic shocks*.

The IPA ADRION programme eligible area involves 10 countries, out of which 4 EU Member States (hereinafter ERDF participating countries), 5 non-EU Partner States, (hereinafter IPA participating countries); and one third country, namely:

ERDF participating countries:

- ⇒ **Croatia** (NUTS regions: Panonska Hrvatska; Jadranska Hrvatska; Grad Zagreb; Sjeverna Hrvatska);
- ⇒ **Greece** (NUTS regions: Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki; Kentriki Makedonia; Dytiki Makedonia; Thessalia; Ipeiros; Ionia Nisia; Dytiki Ellada; Sterea Ellada; Peloponnisos; Attiki; Voreio Aigaio; Notio Aigaio; Kriti);
- ⇒ **Italy** (NUTS regions: Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli- Venezia Giulia, Lombardia, Marche, Molise, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Puglia, Sicilia, Umbria, Veneto);
- ⇒ **Slovenia**: (NUTS regions: Vzhodna Slovenija; Zahodna Slovenija).

IPA participating countries:

- ⇒ **Albania**;
- ⇒ **Bosnia and Herzegovina**;
- ⇒ **North Macedonia**;
- ⇒ **Montenegro**;

⇒ **Serbia.**

Third Country:

⇒ **San Marino.**

This document outlines the main features of the first call for proposal of the IPA ADRION programme. It is an integral part of the “Application package first call for proposals”, available in the [Programme website](#) composed by the following documents:

- INTERREG VI-B IPA Adriatic-Ionian Cooperation Programme adopted by the European Commission with Decision C(2022)8953;
- Application Manual first call for proposals;
- Off-line Application Form;
- Lead Partner and Project Partner’s Declaration templates;
- Associated Partners’ Declaration of interest template;
- Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS) guidance;
- Subsidy Contract Template;
- Partnership Agreement Template.

2. First Call Thematic Focus

The first call for proposals of the IPA ADRION programme is addressed **only** to the following **Priorities and Specific Objectives**:

1. Priority Axis 1: Supporting a Smarter Adriatic and Ionian Region

- **Specific Objective 1.1:** *Strengthening innovation capacities in the Adriatic - Ionian region (ref. to SO 1.1 ERDF Regulation)*

2. Priority Axis 2: Supporting a Greener and Climate Resilient Adriatic and Ionian Region

- **Specific Objective 2.1:** *Enhancing resilience to climate change, natural and man-made disasters in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.4 ERDF Regulation)*
- **Specific Objective 2.2:** *Supporting circular economy development in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.6 ERDF Regulation)*
- **Specific Objective 2.3:** *Supporting environment preservation and protection in the Adriatic Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.7 ERDF Regulation)*
- **Specific Objective 2.4:** *Supporting sustainable multimodal urban mobility in the Adriatic - Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.8 ERDF Regulation)*

3. Priority Axis 3: Supporting a Carbon Neutral and Better Connected Adriatic and Ionian Region

- **Specific Objective 3.1:** *Strengthening a carbon neutral smart mobility in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 3.2 ERDF Regulation)*

The programme will pursue its main objective through the financial support granted to transnational projects supporting the identification of common solutions in the main areas of interest of the region, contributing thus to its **specific objectives and indicative actions to which the call is focused** as listed below:

PRIORITY AXIS 1 – SUPPORTING A SMARTER ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

Specific Objective 1.1 - Strengthening innovation capacities in the Adriatic - Ionian region (ref. to SO 1.1 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

- Develop transnational Smart Specialization Strategies in the main areas of specialization of the Adriatic Ionian area (especially in the following main sectors: energy, ICT systems and technologies, energy and sustainable environment, disaster prevention, smart mobility, innovative production technologies and advanced materials, blue economy);
- Promote and set-up multi-level governance schemes to facilitate transnational cooperation models to address challenges in common areas of specialization;
- Uptake, up-scale and test advanced technologies through pilot and joint actions, policies, tools and processes, particularly in, but not limited to, the main fields of interest of S3 (sectors as indicated in indicative actions No.1);
- Promote and encourage the development of transnationally designed innovations (technical and non-technical innovation, including services) through pilot and joint actions contributing to face societal and environmental challenges like energy efficiency or climate change;
- Promote the development of transnational partnerships, cluster-to-cluster cooperation, innovative networks, and similar initiatives;
- Promote digital divide reduction by enhancing digital solutions in the private and public sector, and digital capacity building;
- Support the development of transnational and macro-regional clusters in the emerging sectors as advanced packaging; biopharmaceuticals, blue economy industries, mobility tech, logistical services, environment industries, etc.(sectors as indicated in indicative actions No. 1);
- Promote actions and measures supporting SMEs development and modernization including intellectual property, technical and financial issues; testing solutions closer to the market (i.e.: proof of concept mechanisms, etc.), as well as the introduction of quality and sustainable requirements.

PRIORITY AXIS 2 – SUPPORTING A GREENER AND CLIMATE RESILIENT ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

Specific Objective 2.1 - Enhancing resilience to climate change, natural and man-made disasters in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.4 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

- Develop and implement integrated joint transnational strategies and measures aimed at enhancing the resilience to climate change of coastal, river basins, rural and mountainous areas through a harmonised framework of standards and indicators and use of already existing research results and contributions to EU platforms (e.g.: EU Risk Data Hub, Climate-ADAPT);
- Develop and implement transnational joint action plans to coordinate measures addressed to natural and man-made disaster prevention and standardized responses (e.g.: intense rainfalls,

- floods, landslides, heatwaves, heat islands, draughts, wildfires, oil spill, plastics at sea, river contamination etc.) by prioritizing nature based solutions instead of traditional grey infrastructures;
- Collect compelling information and use it to develop advocacy material to strengthen synergies and increase preparedness among local/regional/national civil protection bodies on natural and man-made risks;
 - Implement pilot actions for a shared and coordinated use of big data for modelling, early forecasting and warning systems to reduce climate change risks.

Specific Objective 2.2 - Supporting circular economy development in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.6 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

- Collect compelling information, implement exchange of experience, and test actions to develop advocacy material to increase knowledge and preparedness among policy makers and public administrators on the potentials of circular economy, and test actions/ experience exchange for practical implementation;
- Identify and implement transnational action plans and strategies to enhance and/or scale up circular economy at regional/national/macro-regional level (e.g.: setting up transnational/networks for secondary raw materials, creating transnational marketplaces for recycling/up-recycling products);
- Set in place joint actions and innovation networks to test science-based solutions aimed at collecting and recycling marine litter (e.g.: plastic litter, plastic fishing gear etc.);

Specific Objective 2.3 - Supporting environment preservation and protection in the Adriatic Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.7 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

- Define and implement policy frameworks, strategies and related implementation to protect and enhance natural terrestrial and sea habitats, including protected areas and areas under Habitat and Birds Directives;
- Test solutions to protect and restore flora and fauna (with particular attention to algae/poseidonia oceanica, large carnivores, pollinating insects, migrators, fishes), also envisaging the use of blue and green infrastructure;
- Identify and transfer good practices and innovative solutions addressing the presence of alien marine species and the preservation of native flora and fauna in terrestrial environments;
- Define action plans to reinforce the implementation of existing/new Integrated Coastal Zone Management, Maritime Spatial Planning and the MSFD (EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive) as well as the implementation of the UN Barcelona Convention, in particular with regard to the management and monitoring of marine protected areas;
- Define and implement legally binding agreements with key actors to reduce plastic discharge into the sea;
- In the framework of Maritime Spatial Planning, develop and implement joint strategies on Adriatic and Ionian seas to safeguard biodiversity also taking into account the conflicting sea exploitation: tourism, commercial and recreational shipping, aquaculture plants, settlements of offshore wind parks, oil and gas extraction etc.;

Specific Objective 2.4 - Supporting sustainable multimodal urban mobility in the Adriatic -Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.8 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

- Elaborate joint actions to develop and implement intelligent transport system solutions devoted to a better infrastructure use and new mobility services to improve sustainable, clean and smart mobility systems and smart management of traffic flows for cities and functional urban areas;
- Set in place joint actions aimed at promoting the active involvement of citizens, tourism actors and economic operators in the development of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) both in cities and in functional urban areas;
- Support the shift towards sustainable and accessible urban public transport and active modes (e.g.: cycling, walking) through the implementation of joint pilot actions, by also taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the electro-mobility revolution.

PRIORITY AXIS 3 – SUPPORTING A CARBON NEUTRAL AND BETTER CONNECTED ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

Specific Objective 3.1 - Strengthening a carbon neutral smart mobility in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 3.2 ERDF Regulation)

The following indicative actions shall be granted:

- Set in place transnational cooperation actions to develop and/or improve sustainable smart mobility systems to strengthen urban-rural linkages and implement innovative sustainable transport solutions, including forms of participatory governance to improve multimodal and low carbon mobility for passengers, tourists, and commuters of the Adriatic-Ionian region;
- Support environmental performance and energy efficiency for low carbon port systems and related infrastructures – such as noise reduction, air quality, decrease of CO2 emissions - through the adoption of pilot actions testing innovative technologies, circular economy solutions, energy sustainability and harmonised regulatory standards for maritime/river transport;
- Strengthen the role of the Adriatic-Ionian transport sector within the upcoming TEN-T policy through pilot actions and the implementation of shared solutions aimed at boosting the role of ICT, in particular with regard to the dematerialization of transport procedures, especially in maritime port areas;
- Enhance the development of the Motorways of the Seas (MoS) concept as an alternative to overstretched land transport through targeted strategies and action plans, aimed at making full use of maritime transport resources as well as inland waterways in the logistics chain;
- Support the increase of Short Sea Shipping (SSS) in the Adriatic-Ionian Sea basin as sustainable transport mode through joint developed actions, including the promotion of the use of alternative fuels/modes and last / first mile environmentally friendly solutions.

A project proposal must be addressed only to one Specific Objective. Reference to the selected indicative action(s) is required to be provided in the summary section of the application form. Interested applicants must be aware that contribution to the Specific Objective selected and the chosen indicative action(s) is subject to the selection process.

Interested applicants, during the design of their project proposals are also required to refer to the expected results, target groups and indicators available in the Application Manual first call for proposals – Annex 1.

3. Partnership requirements

Eligible project proposals must involve partners located in the programme geographical area.

Each project must involve at least **six financing partners** from **six different participating countries** of the Programme area, out of which:

- At least 3 partners from **3 different ERDF participating countries**.
- At least 3 partners from **3 different IPA participating countries**.

The partnership can include up to a **maximum of 2 financing Project Partners from the same participating country**.

The same organization cannot be:

- **Lead Partner in more than 2 project proposals in two different Priority Axis;**
- **Involved in more than 3 project proposals per call.**

As an exception, the following public institutions/private non-commercial entities can be considered as “per department”:

- Ministries;
- Regional bodies (regions/counties/autonomous provinces);
- Universities/research institutions;
- Chambers of Commerce and Industry (with its sectoral associations/chambers/regional networks).

“Department” is understood as an organisational unit with financial and administrative autonomy and having technical and administrative staff to ensure its functioning. Thus, each single department, within the above institutions, can be considered as a separate potential applicant.

It is **recommended** that eligible partnership does not involve more than **12 financing project partners**.

Institutions located in San Marino can be involved in the projects either as partners or associated partners. They will not benefit from Interreg funds; their engagement shall be ensured by their own funds. Their participation shall not count for the fulfilment of the minimum eligible partnership size requirement.

The potential beneficiaries will be identified on the basis of VAT or "other identification number" to be reported in the B section of the Application Form.

Correctness of data will be verified by the National Contact Points, who will be the responsible bodies for the identification of the partners and the consequent verification on the number of applications the same partner is involved in.

4. Eligible Applicants

All organizations interested in being part of a project proposal must fulfil all the following criteria:

- Established **under the national law of one of the participating countries of the Programme**;
- **Have their legal seat and their seat of operations in a participating country/part of a participating country included in the Programme area**;
- Be endowed with **legal personality**.

As an exception, and in order to overcome the geographical constraints applying to Italy, those Italian public authorities at national level which are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but located outside of it (e.g.: Ministries), are considered as *Assimilated partners*, with equal in rights and obligations of applicants located within the Programme geographical area.

In addition to the above, eligible financing project partners shall either be, according to their legal status:

- Public authorities at **national, regional and local public bodies**, and associations formed by one or several of such public bodies;
- **Bodies governed by public law**, and associations constituted by one or several bodies governed by public law, as defined in Article 2(4) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement;
- **EGTC**, in accordance with art. 23.6 of Interreg Regulation. Eligible EGTC must be governed by the law of one of the IPA ADRION participating countries where the EGTC has its registered office. An EGTC cannot be a sole partner of an IPA ADRION project proposal;
- **Private bodies**, including private companies, having legal personality;
- **International organisations** under the national law of one of the IPA ADRION participating countries.

5. Lead Partner

The following bodies/organizations located in ERDF and IPA participating countries shall be considered as eligible Lead Partners:

- Public bodies, including their association.
- Bodies governed by public law, including EGTCs, governed by public law;
- International organizations ruled by national law;
- Assimilated partners.

6. Time schedule and submission

The first call for proposal will be open from **4 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 at 13:00 (CEST/Rome time)** and will follow a “one-step application procedure”, i.e. submission of the project proposal in its entirety and requested supporting documents within the indicated deadline.

Project proposals must be submitted in English language and only through the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS) available at the following link: <https://jems.regione.emilia-romagna.it>

Lead Partners need to register on the JEMS and provide a set of credentials (username and password) to create and submit their AF on behalf of the entire partnership.

The Lead Partner shall be in charge for the submission of the Application on behalf of its partnership.

Applications must be drawn up in English, using the on-line form specifically designed for this purpose.

No other method of submission of an application will be accepted. No exceptions will be made.

The submission process is paperless.

Full information on the application and selection procedure is detailed in the chapter “*Procedure for submission and selection of project proposals*” of the Application Manual - first call for proposals.

7. Budget available

The amount of Interreg funds allocated to the first call for proposals is around **EUR 65.691.511**, indicatively allocated per Priority Axes and Specific Objectives according to the following:

Priority Axis	Specific Objective	EU EU allocation – Interreg funds
Priority Axis 1	SO1.1 - Strengthening innovation capacities in the Adriatic - Ionian region (ref. to SO 1.1 ERDF Regulation)	16.720.734
Priority Axis 2	Specific Objective 2.1 - Enhancing resilience to climate change, natural and man-made disasters in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.4 ERDF Regulation)	14.010.826
	Specific Objective 2.2 - Supporting circular economy development in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.6 ERDF Regulation)	5.032.623
	Specific Objective 2.3 - Supporting environment preservation and protection in the Adriatic Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.7 ERDF Regulation)	14.493.952
	Specific Objective 2.4 - Supporting sustainable multimodal urban mobility in the Adriatic -Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.8 ERDF Regulation)	8.723.212
Priority Axis 3	Specific Objective 3.1 - Strengthening a carbon neutral smart mobility in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 3.2 ERDF Regulation)	6.710.164
TOTAL		65.691.511

The Monitoring Committee of the IPA ADRION programme reserves the right not to commit all available resources, depending on the quality of submitted applications.

Upon completion of the assessment, the submitted applications will be ranked per each Specific Objective and will be co-financed according to the EU resources available based on the decision of the Monitoring Committee.

8. Project size

Project proposals submitted in the framework of the IPA ADRION programme first call for proposals shall have an **EU budget (INTERREG funds) up to a maximum of EUR 1.500.000,00**.

The project budget must be built on the principle of sound financial management, i.e.: it must truly reflect the activities foreseen in the project.

9. Co-financing rate

IPA ADRION EU contribution will be limited to a co-financing rate up to 85% of eligible costs for all financing PPs. The share of expenditure (at least 15%) not covered by Interreg funds shall be ensured by national co-financing sources.

Applicants can refer to their national NCPs for an overview of the national co-financing systems.

In case applicants intend to implement activities being considered as State Aid relevant, the maximum grant will be calculated applying the *de minimis rule* while respecting the co-financing percentage above.

10. Project duration

As far as first call for proposals is concerned, the project duration, the project duration shall be up to a **maximum of 36 months**.

Applicants shall indicate the start and end date in the application form, taking into account the necessary time for the assessment and selection process and contracting procedures.

Approved operations will be offered, if this is the case, the possibility of modifying this starting date as reported in the application form before the signature of the subsidy contract.

11. Selection of projects

The assessment of the applications is coordinated by the Managing Authority and performed by the Joint Secretariat, with the support of the National Contact Points and of external experts selected through a dedicated Expression of Interest.

In order to ensure equal, fair, and transparent approach, the project proposals are assessed according to a set of criteria previously elaborated by the Programme, approved by the Monitoring Committee and detailed below:

Admissibility and Eligibility checks (ref. to Application Manual - first Call for proposals – Annex 3): are aimed at verifying the respect of all formal and substantial minimum conditions of eligibility.

Only the applications that have passed the admissibility and eligibility checks shall be assessed from a quality point of view.

Quality assessment (ref. to Application Manual – first Call for proposals – Annex 4): is performed according to a list of criteria and is aimed at assessing the relevance and feasibility of project proposals. The assessment is divided into two steps:

Strategic assessment - whose main aim is to determine the extent of the project's contribution to the achievement of programme objectives (contribution to programme results), by addressing joint or common target group needs.

The strategic assessment shall be performed according to the following criteria:

- Project relevance
- Project intervention logic
- Partnership relevance
- Cooperation character.

Only the project proposals having reached an overall score of **at least 36/60 (60%** of the overall score related to strategic elements) will progress to the Operational assessment and be appraised according to the criteria of group 2.

Operational assessment - whose main aim is to assess the viability and the feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its value for money in terms of resources used versus results delivered.

The operational assessment shall be performed according to the following criteria:

- Work plan
- Communication
- Budget.

As far as the Operational Assessment is concerned, the proposals not reaching at least 30/50 (60% of the overall score related to operational assessment) will be rejected.

The total score of each criterion is the sum of the scores attributed to each sub-criterion. Maximum scores for each sub-criterion are provided in the Annex4 – Quality assessment grid of the Application Manual.

Each criterion is composed of several sub-criteria measured according to scores (1-5). Each sub-criterion will be attributed a score ranging from 1 to 5 according to the following grid:

5	Excellent – the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is of excellent quality and provides clear and coherent information
4	Good – the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is clear and contain minor shortcomings
3	Fair -the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is sufficiently clear and requires further clarification from the applicant
2	Sufficient - the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion is of low quality
1	Poor - the section of the application analysed in accordance with the requirement of the criterion does not meet the requirement/the information is not present

Overall assessment of project proposals will result from summing up the evaluation scores of strategic and operational assessments.

Only those proposals having passed the quality assessment (strategic and operational) with a score of 66/110 (60% of the overall maximum score) will be considered for funding and shall be appraised according to the further steps as described in the Application Manual.

The list of the quality assessment criteria and related sub-criteria (strategic and operational) are provided in the Application Manual - Annex 4.

12. Additional information and support

More information regarding IPA ADRION Programme, conditions for the submission of project proposals, assessment of proposals, the application package as well as other relevant information is available at [Programme Website www.adrioninterreg.eu](http://www.adrioninterreg.eu).

The IPA ADRION MA/JS at programme level and NCPs at national level shall promote the call for proposals through:

- Dedicated events in hybrid form (on-line and in person);
- Dedicated information on the programme web site and on the NCPs dedicated web pages;
- Support to beneficiaries via email (info@interregadrion.eu), and meetings.

Interested applicants are warmly invited to get in contact with the representatives of the National Contact Points located in each IPA ADRION participating countries, as well as with the Joint Secretariat based in Bologna (Italy). Contact information is also available on the [Programme Website](http://www.adrioninterreg.eu). Support of the JS and NCPs may not be ensured after 19 June 2023.