

**Interreg VI - B IPA Adriatic Ionian
Cooperation Programme 2021-2027
“IPA ADRION”
Announcement of the 2nd 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 2nd 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 Partner States, out of which 4 EU Member States (hereinafter ERDF participating countries), 5 non-EU Partner States (hereinafter IPA participating countries); and one third Partner State, 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 2nd call for proposals of the IPA ADRION Programme. It is an integral part of the “Application package 2nd call for proposals”, available on the <https://www.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/> and 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 2nd call for proposals;
- Off-line Application Form;
- Lead Partner and Project Partner Declaration templates;
- Associated Partner declaration of interest template;
- The template of the power of signature in case the LP declaration is signed by a delegated person of the legal representative;
- Subsidy Contract Template;
- Partnership Agreement Template.

Additionally, but not part of the application package, the programme shall provide the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS) guidelines.

2. 2nd Call for proposals Thematic Focus

The 2nd 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 2.3: Supporting environment preservation and protection in the Adriatic Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.7 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 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)

Only the following indicative actions are eligible under the present call:

Develop transnational Smart Specialization Strategies in the main areas of specialization of the Adriatic Ionian area (especially in the following main sectors: health and quality of life, agri-food and safe nutrition, sustainable tourism, and creative 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, processes, particularly in, but not limited to, the main fields of interest of S3 and social innovation (as indicated in indicative action 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 challenges like demographic change.

Promote the development of transnational partnerships, cluster-to-cluster cooperation, innovative networks, and similar initiatives.

Support digital divide reduction by addressing sustainable development, resilience to climate change, as well as addressing wellbeing - including health for the youth and elderly, hospital, and home care - and demographic trends.

Develop and implement e-services such as: e-government, e-learning, or e-marketing or digital tools for industrial and creative production.

Support the development of transnational and macro-regional clusters in the emerging sectors as creative and digital industries; medical devices, as well as sustainable tourism, etc (sectors as indicated in indicative action No.1).

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)

Only the following indicative actions are eligible under the present call:

Develop, implement, and promote transnational climate change adaptation strategies, plans and test solutions with a focus on people's health, preservation of natural and cultural heritage and urban areas.

In the framework of Maritime Spatial Planning activities, develop transnational joint plans and pilot actions to boost resilience to climate change in marine ecosystems.

Design and implement strategies and action plans at local, regional and national level for the safeguard of water resources (rainwater management, river and lake water retention, water scarcity, drinking water, water availability, agricultural forecasting, breeding, industry and population).

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

Only the following indicative actions are eligible under the present call:

Collect compelling information and use it to develop advocacy material to strengthen synergies and increase preparedness among local/regional/national policy makers and administrators to set in place actions aimed at improving policy frameworks, governance and management schemes of existing or underway marine/natural protected areas.

Exchange of good practices and testing of solutions for sustainable tourism through participatory approaches and multi-level governance.

Identify and test joint action to ensure sustainable food and traditional agricultural products (e.g.: old seeds safeguard, traditional animal breeding etc.) to support the zero-km food chain, food safety and quality.

Contribute to the generation of positive impacts on the Adriatic-Ionian population's health through the identification of good practices and the implementation of pilot actions aimed at reducing air, water and soil pollution.

Define joint actions to enhance soil and water preservation by ensuring data collection and their public availability (e.g.: feeding EU networks like Data Network - EMODnet, agriculture data space).

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)

Only the following indicative actions are eligible under the present call:

Develop and test innovative planning tools/solutions forecasting future demand for public transport in view of the impact caused by current socio-demographic changes and present pandemic situation on intermodal national, regional and local mobility.

Implement transnational integrated action plans supporting the development of rail-sea transportation intended as intermodal and multimodal transport mode.

Map infrastructural, technological, legislative gaps and barriers to freight circulation including the legal and administrative variances hampering the efficiency of smooth transnational transport, in order to create a common transnational transport policy framework.

Improve accessibility within the Adriatic-Ionian region, with a focus on peripheral areas, to the TEN-T network through the implementation of action plans, tackling the bottlenecks hampering the transport sector growth and economic development.

A project proposal must:

- **Address one Specific Objective;**
- **Address one or more of the eligible indicative action(s) related to the chosen Specific Objective;**
- **Address the expected results, target groups and indicators available in the Application Manual, 2nd call for proposals – Annex 1;**
- **Compulsorily envisage capacity development activities.**

The project proposal can also address the activities aimed at strengthening the leverage effects of investments and policy developments as an optional activity.

Interested applicants must be aware that contribution to the Specific Objective selected and the chosen indicative action(s) are subject to the assessment process.

3. Partnership requirements

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

Each project must involve at least **4 financing partners** from **4 different participating countries** of the Programme area, out of which:

- **At least 2 financing partners from 2 different ERDF participating countries.**
- **At least 2 financing partners from 2 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 may not be involved in more than 2 project proposals, out of which only in one as Lead Partner.

Partners from San Marino do not contribute to the eligibility of the partnership.

Organisations 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.

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.

4. Eligible Applicants

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

- **Be 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 level**, 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 organizations located in ERDF and IPA participating countries shall be considered as eligible LPs:

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

The accuracy of the data will be checked by the National Contact Points, which will be the responsible for verifying the legal status of the partners and compliance with the participation limits set by the call.

6. Opening of the call and submission of project proposals

The 2nd call for proposal will be open from **15 April 2025 to 30 June 2025** at the latest by h. 13.00 (CEST/Rome time) and will follow a “one-step application procedure”, i.e. the submission of the project proposal in its entirety and of the 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 applicants need to register on the JEMS and provide a set of credentials (username and password) to create and submit their project proposal AF on behalf of the entire partnership.

The submission process is paperless.

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

Full information on the application and selection procedure is detailed in the chapter “*Procedure for submission and selection of project proposals*” of the 2nd call for proposals Application Manual.

7. Programme budget available

The amount of Interreg funds allocated to the second call for proposals is around **MEUR 21,87**, indicatively allocated per Priority Axes and Specific Objectives according to the following:

Priority Axis	Specific Objective	EU allocation INTERREG funds
PA1	SO1.1 - Strengthening innovation capacities in the Adriatic - Ionian region (ref. to SO 1.1 ERDF Regulation)	4.804.638,05
PA2	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)	7.220.267,58
	Specific Objective 2.3 - Supporting environment preservation and protection in the Adriatic Ionian region (ref. to SO 2.7 ERDF Regulation)	6.180.167,82
PA3	Specific Objective 3.1 - Strengthening a carbon neutral smart mobility in the Adriatic- Ionian region (ref. to SO 3.2 ERDF Regulation)	3.664.291,40
	TOTAL	21.869.364,85

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 financial size

Project proposals submitted in the framework of the IPA ADRION Programme 2nd call for proposals shall have an EU budget (INTERREG funds) up to a maximum of **EUR 1.200.000,00**.

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 of all financing Project Partners. The share of expenditure (at least 15%) not covered by the Interreg funds shall be ensured by national co-financing sources.

Applicants can refer to their National Contact Points for information on the national co-financing systems.

In case planned activities are considered as State Aid relevant during the assessment, the maximum grant will be calculated in accordance with the *de minimis rule* while respecting the co-financing percentage above.

9.1 Project duration

Project proposals expected to be granted under this call for proposals shall not exceed the duration of **36 months**.

Approved projects will be required to indicate the starting date before the signature of the subsidy contract.

9.2 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 external experts included in the Programme Roster of the 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 2nd Call for proposals – Annex 3): are aimed at verifying the respect of all formal and substantial minimum conditions of eligibility.

Only those applications which successfully pass the admissibility checks will progress to eligibility checks; and only those that pass the eligibility checks shall be assessed from a quality point of view.

Quality assessment (ref. to Application Manual 2nd 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 groups:

1. ***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 and Cooperation character.

Only the project proposals having reached an overall score of **at least 30/50 (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.

If the project proposal has achieved this minimum score, the assessors will check whether the optional activities “*Strengthening the leverage effects of investments and policy development*” have been included in the project proposal and will proceed with their evaluation.

As optional project activities, they will not contribute to the strategic qualitative assessment, but they may increase the project’s overall final score by a maximum of 3 points, provided that the project is assessed positively from a strategic point of view.

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:

- Management and Communication;
- Budget.

As far as the Operational Assessment is concerned, the proposals not reaching at least **15/25 (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 Annex 4 – 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.

Only those proposals having passed the quality assessment (Strategic and Operational) with a score of **45/75 (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 Annex 4 of the Application Manual.

Overall evaluation of proposals will result from summing up the evaluation scores of strategic and operational assessments, and the possible additional scores attributed to the optional activities.

9.3 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 <https://www.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/>.

The IPA ADRION Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat at programme level and National Contact Points 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 National Contact Points dedicated web pages
- FAQs
- Support to beneficiaries via email (ipa-adrion@regione.emilia-romagna.it), and online/in person meetings
- IPA ADRION Partner search Platform.

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, (lead applicants only). Contact information is also available on the <https://www.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/>.