Interreg V-B Adriatic- Ionian Programme – ADRION 2014 -2020

Announcement of the 2nd call for proposals

for Priority Axis 2

1. Introduction

The Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian 2014-2020 (hereinafter ADRION), set up in the framework of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) - one of the objectives of the cohesion policy - is launching its second call for proposals for Priority Axis 2 and invites all interested eligible public and private applicants to submit project proposals.

The detailed conditions for the 2nd call for proposals for Priority Axis 2 can be found in the following documents, altogether referred to as "Application package second call for Priority Axis 2", which constitute an integral part of this call announcement and are available for download (as separate documents or as a single zipped file) from the Programme website www.interregadrion.eu:

➢ ADRION Cooperation Programme adopted by the European Commission with Decision C (2015) 7147;

➢ Second Programme Manual Priority Axis 2;

➢ Off-line application form and annexes;

➢ Applicants' Guidelines on the use of e-monitoring system (e-MS).

2. Partnership requirements

The ADRION Programme comprises 4 EU Partner States and 4 non-EU Partner States, namely:

EU Partner States:

⇨ **Italy:** Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lombardia, Marche, Molise, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Puglia, Sicilia, Umbria, Veneto;

⇨ **Slovenia;**

⇨ **Greece;**

⇨ **Croatia.**

Non-EU Partner States:

⇨ **Albania;**

⇨ **Bosnia and Herzegovina;**

⇨ **Montenegro;**

⇨ **Serbia.**

EU financing is only provided to project partners located in the Programme Area. Each project must involve at least six financing partners from six different Partner states of the Programme area, out of them:

- At least 4 partners from 4 different ERDF Partner States;

- At least 2 partners from 2 different IPA Partner States.

The partnership can include a maximum of 2 partners from the same Partner State.

The eligible partnership can consist of a maximum of 16 partners.

The same institution:

- cannot be Lead Partner in more than 1 project proposal per Specific Objective;

- cannot be Project Partner in more than 2 project proposals if also applying as Lead Partner in a project proposal in the same Specific Objective;

- if not applying as Lead Partner, it can be Project Partner in no more than 3 project proposals per Specific Objective;

- if private, can participate only in one project proposal per Specific Objective.

3. Eligible applicants

All bodies/organisations interested in being part of a project proposal must fulfil all the following criteria to be eligible:

➢ Be established under the national law of one of the Partner State participating in the Programme;

➢ Have their legal seat and their seat of operations in the Partner State /part of the Partner State 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 or bodies governed by public law which are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area but which are located outside of it (e.g.:. Ministries) are considered as assimilated partners, equal in rights and obligations to applicants located within the Programme area.

In addition to the above, the following legal entities are considered as eligible:

➢ National, regional and local public bodies, including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation No 1303/2013 and associations formed by one or several of such public bodies;

➢ Body governed by public law, and associations formed by one or several bodies governed by public law;

➢ Private bodies, including private companies, having legal personality and operational from at least 2 fiscal years at the time of submission of the candidature;

➢ International organisations acting from at least 2 fiscal years at the time of submission of the candidature under the national law of one of the Partner State participating in the Programme.

4. Lead applicant

Only the following bodies located in the EU Partner States shall be considered as eligible lead applicants:

➢ Public bodies (national, regional or local level), including associations formed by one or several regional or local authorities governed by public law;

➢ Bodies governed by public law, including associations formed by one or several bodies governed by public law;

➢ EGTCs in accordance with art. 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013;

➢ Assimilated partners;

➢ International organizations acting under national law.

5. Specific Objectives and Topics

The overall objective of the ADRION Programme is to act as a policy driver and governance innovator fostering European integration among Partner States, taking advantage of the rich natural, cultural and human resources surrounding the Adriatic and Ionian seas and enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Programme area.

The Programme will pursue its overall objective through the financial support granted to transnational projects contributing to its specific objectives.

The second call for proposals is open only to the Programme Priority Axis 2, its Specific Objectives, topics and sub-topics as listed below:

Priority Axis 2: Sustainable region

➢ **Specific Objective 2.1**: **Promote the sustainable valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural assets as growth assets in the Adriatic-Ionian area;**

Topic 1: *Preserve, capitalise and innovate cultural and natural heritage.*

Compulsory sub-topics:

- Increase competitiveness through the exchange of practices for improving the collaboration between tourism and other related sectors;

- Promote policies in mountainous areas for rural development that integrate both the conservation requirements as well as the sustained welfare of inhabitants;

- Develop more participative interpretation and governance models through greater involvement of the private sector and civil society.

- Develop actions for raising competencies/skills also related to creative industries to support cultural heritage preservation and sustainable tourism;

- Support the modernization of the natural and cultural heritage sector, raising awareness and engaging new audiences also through the digitalization and the realization of open networks foreseeing the involvement of young people;

- Support the preservation of cultural and natural landscapes.

Topic 2: *Monitor, evaluate and mitigate environmental and social pressure for and by tourism.*

Compulsory sub-topics:

- Set up, test and implement negotiation, mediation, participation and conflict resolution models in the context of tourism, culture preservation, local needs and economic growth in the context of cultural and natural heritage;

- Encourage the assessment of the transnational effects of fast growing segments such as cruise tourism, examining the interlinkages between port facilities, marinas, and other maritime industries and of issues concerning competition between land and maritime users in coastal environment.

Topic 3: *Develop sustainable tourism by reducing pollutant agents.*

Compulsory sub-topics:

- Develop sustainable tourism models focusing on low carbon, air quality improvement and decreasing PM and NO2 emissions, low ecological footprint, "slow food", involvement of young people and volunteers and other alternative offerings in line with the natural and cultural heritage.

➢ **Specific Objective 2.2**: Enhance the capacity in transnationally tackling environmental vulnerability, fragmentation and the safeguarding of ecosystem services in the Adriatic-Ionian area.

Topic 1: *Implement research and evaluation activities to protect and managing terrestrial and maritime landscapes and habitats including awareness raising and environmental education.*

Compulsory sub-topics:

- Promote and exchange experience for the adoption of coherent National Strategies for ICM (ICZM Protocol) and transnational maritime spatial plans (MSP Directive);

- Monitor protecting species (e.g.: sea turtles, cetaceans) as indicators of the Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Adriatic and Ionian seas addressing the threats to biodiversity and water quality (e.g.: impacts of micro-litter, micro-pollutants and bio toxins);

- Increase and promote marine knowledge with a focus on the network of marine protected areas;

- Develop joint management plans for transboundary habitats and ecosystems and for managing population level of large carnivores;

- Strengthen transboundary linkages between sites included in the Natura2000 network via ecological networks and green infrastructures, developing joint monitoring of the ecosystem services of forests (especially their capacity to act as carbon sinks and to store water resources), and protecting and restoration wetlands and karst fields relevant for the Adriatic Flyway;

- Set up, test and implement negotiation, mediation, participation and conflict resolution models in the context of environmental protection, increasing pressure of human activities and environmental changes (in particular with regard to climate change).

Topic 2: *Manage and prevent pollution diffusion*.

Compulsory sub-topics:

- Develop and integrate early warning systems for the identification, managing and preventing localized and diffused pollution from various sources (e.g.: oil spills from maritime transport and marine litter in general, industrial pollution and discharges, accidents, nitrates from agriculture, organic load from aquaculture, noise, light- and wastewater-pollution from tourism hotspots, landfills, soil contamination etc.);

- Develop models aimed at supporting waste management/recycling.

Topic 3: *Manage and prevent natural and manmade hazards*.

Compulsory sub-topics:

- Develop and integrate existing of transnational systems, procedures and early warning systems for forecasting, managing and preventing natural and manmade hazards (forest fires, sea and river floods, industrial accidents, droughts, storms, algal blooms, earthquakes erosion and etc.) especially in coordination with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and related IPA initiatives on civil protection, floods management, risk management etc.

A project proposal must address 1 targeted topic. Only in duly justified cases, it is possible to address up to 2 targeted topics within the selected Specific Objective: they shall be thoroughly analysed during the assessment process.

ADRION Programme Priority Axis 2 topics can be tackled through a wide array of instruments and possible actions, reflecting the heterogeneity of the programme area and its diverse needs. Specific information on the expected results, indicative actions to be supported, indicative types of beneficiaries and targets groups are available in SECTION 2 of the Cooperation Programme.

6. Time schedule and submission

The second call for proposal for Priority Axis 2 will be open from **26 March 2018 to 26 June 2018 at 15:00 (CET time)** and will follow a single step procedure, i.e. full information on the scope, objectives, activities, budget, partnership and supporting documents will have to be submitted by the indicated deadline.

Project proposals must be submitted in English language and only through the web-based electronic monitoring system (e-MS) available at www.interregadrion.eu

Lead Applicant needs to register in e-MS system to be able to create and submit valid application forms.

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

The application package for the second call for proposals for Priority Axis 2 contains also the off-line template of application form for information purposes only. The only valid application form will be the one created and submitted via e-MS.

Full information on the application and selection procedure is detailed in the chapter "*Procedure for submission and selection of operations*" of the Programme Manual.

7. Budget available

The ADRION programme will allocate up to MEUR **34.354.026,50** EU co-financing to the second call for proposals for Priority Axis 2, broken down in ERDF and IPAII as follows:

	ERDF	IPA	Total EU contribution
Priority Axis 2	29.197.521,05	5.156.505,45	**34.354.026,50**

The above mentioned amount is indicative, i.e. the Monitoring Committee of the 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 and will be co-financed according to the EU resources available.

8. Project size

Projects submitted within the framework of the ADRION Programme second call for proposals for Priority Axis 2 shall have an EU contribution (ERDF + IPAII) of maximum EUR 2.500.000.

9. Co-financing rate

ADRION contribution will be limited to a co-financing rate up to 85% of eligible costs for all partners (i.e.: both benefitting from ERDF and IPAII contribution). The share of expenditure (at least 15%) not covered by ERDF or IPA funds shall be ensured by national co-financing sources.

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 the second call for proposals is concerned, the project implementation shall not be longer than 30 months, starting from the date indicated in the approved application form.

11. Assessment and selection of projects

The assessment of the application is coordinated by the Managing Authority and performed by the Joint Secretariat, with the support of the National Contact Points and eventually of external experts.

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: are aimed at verifying the respect of all formal and substantial minimum conditions of eligibility.

Only those proposals having positively passed the admissibility and eligibility checks will be progressed to the assessment of their quality.

Qualitative assessment: is performed according to a list of criteria and is aimed at assessing their degree of fulfilment by each project proposal and is divided into two steps:

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 appraisal criteria shall be:

   - Project's context (relevance and strategy);
   - Cooperation character;
   - Partnership relevance;
   - Project's contribution to programme's objectives.

Each criterion is composed of several sub-criteria measured according to scores (1-5).

Only those project proposals having reached a minimum score as for their strategic value will be progressed to the assessment of their operational value.

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 appraisal criteria shall be:
   - Management;
   - Communication;
   - Work plan;
   - Budget.

Each criterion is composed of several sub-criteria measured according to scores (1-5).

A minimum quality threshold will be applied also to the operational value of project proposals.

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

Projects will be finally selected by the Monitoring Committee composed of representatives of all Partner States.

12. Additional information and support

More information regarding ADRION Programme, conditions for the submission of project proposals, assessment of proposals, the application package as well as other relevant information is available at www.interregadrion.eu.

Interested applicants are warmly invited to get in contact with the representatives of the National Contact Points located in each ADRION Partner State, as well as with the Joint Secretariat based in Bologna (Italy). Contact information is available on the programme website.