

**IPA ADRION Programme**  
**Overview on the quality assessment of the project proposals**  
**received under expression of interest - priority axis 4**

**Eligible projects – updated state of play**

As shortly informed the IPA ADRION MC on 3 October 2023, the three lead applicants to whom the invitation was addressed submitted their proposals through JEMS within the set deadline:

<b>Project Number</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Interreg funds</b> A	<b>San Marino funds</b> B	<b>Total funds</b> (A+B+ national contribution 15%)	<i>Interreg contribution (in MEUR) as per Application Manual</i>
IPA-ADRION00537	FACILITYPOINT	EUSAIR FACILITY POINT – Supporting the EUSAIR governance for improved cooperation	6.336.750,00	417.900,00	7.872.900,00	6,336
IPA-ADRION00539	STEP	EUSAIR STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT POINT	1.836.000,00		2.160.000,00	1,836
IPA-ADRION00538	SP4EUSAIR	EUSAIR Strategic Implementation Project - Support to Development and Implementation of Strategic Implementation	1.768.000,00		2.080.000,00	1.768

		Formats				
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9.940.750,00</b>	<b>417.900,00</b>	<b>12.112.900,00</b>	<i>9,941</i>

The envisaged partnerships and budgets mirrored what agreed by the Monitoring Committee (MC) and reported in the Application Manual.

In accordance with the Assessment Manual, the admissibility and eligibility checks have been performed by the JS according to the four-eye principle and approved criteria. Eventual missing documents and/or inconsistencies will be healed during the negotiation process; requests shall be included in the conditions for improvement.

National Contact Points (NCPs) contributed to the eligibility checks through the confirmation of the legal status of the involved partners.

With regard to the anti-fraud checks, they were performed by the NCPs through the consultation of the EDES database of the European Commission (IPA partners), or directly by the MA with regard to the partners from Croatia, Italy and Slovenia; the Greek NCP performed the check through the request of self-declaration; since the Greek involved partner is the same organization that is currently involved in the 2014-2020 Facility Point and this check was recently performed by the NCP in Summer 2023, the outcome of that check was used. The performed checks did not highlight any concern.

At the time of drafting the present document, information on absence of fraudulent behaviours is still missing regarding the partner located in Nord Macedonia.

### **Quality assessment of the received project proposals**

The quality assessment was performed by the Joint Secretariat in accordance with what reported in the assessment manual and the defined assessment criteria.

Many elements characterizing the three project proposals were pre-agreed by the MC, i.e.: the content of each project mirroring the functions defined by the EUSAIR Governing Board as essential for its sound functioning, their budget and partnership. These decisions were, therefore, taken in due account along with the assessment of the received proposals.

In addition to what agreed above, a further simplification regarding the level of details of the budget based on real costs was introduced; it is assumed that the mid-term review, that shall take place on the same year when the programme financial performance will be checked by the European Commission for the first time in this programming period (risk of decommitment) shall allow to re-examine the eventual existence of overbudget, and, if necessary, the rearrangement of the work plan to the extent it will be possible.

The assessment of the project proposals analysed the respect of the minimum principles of cooperation within each partnership, as well as the presence of horizontal principles.

As far as the timeline of the implementation of activities is concerned, and according to the understanding of the received proposals, the three projects - beyond the strong activities of networking characterized by multiple meetings with stakeholders at various levels, consider the finalization of some key activities as suitable for the next programming period, with few or limited effects in the current one. Since the projects are aimed at supporting the functioning of EUSAIR, they will be asked to confirm that the proposed timeline is in accordance with what expected by the EUSAIR Governing Board.

As far as proposed indicators are concerned, the table below provides an overview of their cumulative quantification. As the mid-term review shall require that at least 75% of the indicators reported in the application forms is reached, and considering that the entirety of the available financial resources shall be allocated already now, the table shows a general lack of ambitions.

As a first step, to improve the target performance of RCO 118 - Organisations cooperating for the multi-level governance of macroregional strategies, it is suggested the project No 1 Facility Point to include TSGs representatives thus also to ensure their higher commitment<sup>1</sup>. Also project No 2 STEP is suggested to add this output indicator and to include its three project partners.

As far as indicator RCO 81 – Participations in joint actions across borders – is concerned, its quantification has not been always based on the correct understanding of the definition provided in the EC fiche: the number of subscribers of a newsletter cannot be considered, in our understanding, as a valuable contribution accountable for feeding the indicator, which expects, indeed, an active participation in the joint actions (the EC fiche does not consider the participation in public events to be counted under this indicator, by analogy, it is our understanding that also the subscription to newsletter should not be considered).

	STEP	SP4EUSAIR	FACILITY POINT	Total	proposed indicators quantification vs quantification as in programming document (in %)	Quantification as per programme document
	Quantification of proposed indicators			(A)	(B)= (A)/(C )	(C)
<b>RCO 118 - Organisations cooperating for the multi-level governance of macroregional strategies</b>		2	11	<b>13</b>	26%	50
<b>RCO 81 – Participations in joint actions across borders</b>	4.060	80	4.981	<b>9.121</b>	422%	2160
<b>RCO 115 – Public events across borders jointly organized</b>	8	2	16	<b>26</b>	17%	156

<sup>1</sup> According to the EC fiche definition: “The indicator counts the **legal entities supported by the programme**, listed in the financing agreements, **contributing to the multi-level governance of macroregional strategies**.”

As a concept, the **multi-level governance** refers to collective decision-making processes where authority and influence are shared between stakeholders operating at multiple levels of governance and in different policy sectors. This concept may be customised and understood according to the context of each macroregional strategy.”

<b>RCR 84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project lifetime</b>	5	2	11	<b>18</b>	72%	25
<b>RCR 85 – Participation in joint actions across borders after the project completion</b>	10	40	80	<b>130</b>	12%	1.080

Even if current EC legislative framework does not envisage any countermeasures for those programmes not meeting the performance targets, expected outcomes would result rather low for strategic projects.

With regard to the synergies and coordination mechanism set in place, the efforts performed in fulfilling these tasks have been acknowledged and appreciated. However, apart from a shared description on how coordination will be ensured and included in all the three project proposals, the different use of wording, structure of actions etc. make difficult to completely exclude the absence of overlapping; in some cases clarifications have been asked. Close monitoring of the absence of overlapping must be one element of attention along the projects implementation in order to avoid potential risks of double funding.

The project proposals were also checked in relation to potential risk of the presence of compliance with state aid: such a risk was not identified in any of the received proposals.

Finally, with regard to the specific check according to art. Art. 22.4. letter i) of Interreg Regulation<sup>2</sup>, it has been considered as not applicable due to the nature of the three projects; indeed, this check should be performed by strategic project No 3 - SP4EUSAIR - along with the preparation of project proposals.

The following attachments are enclosed to the present document:

- Annex 1 – IPA ADRION ISO1 ranking list;
- The three quality assessment grids.

### Next steps

Following the approval by the Monitoring Committee, all the lead partners shall be informed on the outcomes of the Monitoring Committee decision; the decision shall also include conditions for improvement and related recommendations regarding what reported above.

The MA shall collect the missing information regarding the still missing anti-fraud check(s).

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<sup>2</sup> ensure that selected operations are not directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement within the scope of Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of operations.

According to art. 73.5 of CPR, MA shall inform the Commission about their selection within 1 month and shall provide all relevant information about.

The negotiation process as well as, if necessary, the dedicated support to the projects shall be ensured by the JS officer in charge of Strategic project ISO 1. Based on the requests of the lead partners, the lead partner seminar can be replaced by bilateral meetings. In both cases the meetings shall take place online.

The finalization of all necessary administrative procedures by the regional administration for the signature of the subsidy contract shall take ca 1 month.