

Annex 1

Methodological approach for the assessment of the project proposal and Tasks of the external assessors

Second call for proposals – Priority Axis 2

The second call for proposals is open to the Programme Priority Axis 2 - Sustainable region - and its Specific Objectives; the call only addresses to the following topics and sub-topics:

- **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, capitalize and innovate cultural and natural heritage**
 - 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**
 - 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**

- 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 manage terrestrial and maritime landscapes and habitats including awareness raising and environmental education**

- 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**

- 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**

- 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.

Under the terms of this call, each project proposal must indicate one targeted topic within the selected Specific Objective of the Priority Axis 2. Only in duly justified cases, the project can refer to two targeted topics (eligibility criterion).

Beneficiaries and target groups include public authorities, agencies, international organizations, research institutions, higher education institutions, education/training centres, schools, business support organisations, interest groups including NGOs and cultural/citizens organisations, enterprises (including SMEs), as well as other institutions which are affected by the topics concerned.

Methodological approach for the assessment of the project proposals

The MA of the ADRION programme is responsible for the coordination of the selection process of the project proposals performed by the JS. The decision-making body is the Monitoring Committee, which is composed of representatives of the Partner States involved.

In accordance with the programme's rules, each eligible application shall be assessed by at least one JS staff member (devoted to content and financial topics) and by an external assessor. Proposals shall be ranked according to their final score.

Selection process of ADRION projects

Applications received within the deadline are subject to a selection process organized along the following steps:

- 1) Admissibility and eligibility checks;
- 2) Strategic Assessment;
- 3) Operational Assessment;
- 4) Financial capacity check (for private partners only);
- 5) State Aid check;
- 6) Anti-fraud check.

More specifically:

Strategic assessment - The assessment criteria shall be:

- Project's context;
- Cooperation character;
- Project's contribution to programme's objectives, expected results and outputs;
- Partnership relevance;

Operational assessment - The assessment criteria shall be:

- Management;
- Communication;
- Work plan;
- Budget.

External assessors shall contribute to steps 2) and 3).

Tasks of the external assessors

The selected assessors shall be in charge of assessing the eligible project proposals by applying the pre-defined assessment criteria and using a standard assessment form (structured in criteria and sub-criteria) made available by the programme.

The assessment shall require the analysis of the application in all its parts (content and financial).

External assessors shall attribute to each sub-criterion:

- A clear qualitative description (highlighting the strengths and weaknesses);
- A duly justified score.

He/she must also provide assessment conclusions of the project proposal as a whole.

The overall assessment must be clearly structured and comprehensive, putting the JS in the position to justify a recommendation for funding or rejection.

Peer review with the JS shall take place for discussing the outcomes of the assessment and further fine tuning (mostly over the phone or video conference) in order to agree on a common standpoint.

The external assessors must also support the JS in defining the conditions for improvements for those project proposals that are recommended for funding.

In order to satisfactorily comply with the above, the external assessors shall:

- Be acquainted with the relevant programme documents (e.g.: Cooperation Programme, Programme Manual for the second call for proposals, application package);

- Closely communicate, update and exchange information with the JS.

Projects assessment may be performed at the external assessors' premises or place of work (remote assessment).

The external assessors shall attend a kick-off meeting aimed at presenting the activities to be done, the assessment process – including an overview of the relevant elements to be assessed - documentation to be used and time line.

Meetings and updates shall take place at the JS premises, via conference call, skype, phone, emails.