

Interreg



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IPA Greece - Albania

Frequently Asked Questions: 1st Call for Common Project Proposals

Cross-border Cooperation Programme
Interreg (VI-A) IPA CBC
“Greece - Albania 2021-2027”

The Programme is co-funded by European Union and National Funds of the participating countries.

Table of Contents

Project Development and Submission	3
Eligibility of applicants.....	7
Eligibility of Expenditure & Financing.....	12

Project Development and Submission

1. May someone other than the legal representative of the Lead Beneficiary sign the Concept Note, such as a Vice President or Head of Department?

The Concept Note template must be signed by the legal representative of the Beneficiary's organization that intends to become the Lead Beneficiary. If the legal representative's deputy has the authority to sign official documents, they may sign the concept note instead. However, in such a case, an official document confirming the deputy's authorization to sign the Concept Note must be submitted attached in MIS along with the concept note.

2. The proposal is prepared by all beneficiaries and is submitted by the Lead Beneficiary. Should it be signed only by the Lead beneficiary?

The project proposal should be signed only by the legal representative of the Lead Beneficiary.

3. Do we need to submit a Letter of Intention and/or a formal decision of the Beneficiary's Administration Board along with the Concept Note for a project proposal?

Each potential beneficiary should follow its own set of specified rules for such matters. It is not compulsory to attach a Letter of Intention and/or such a decision with the Concept Note. However, it is recommended that all potential beneficiaries should sign a "Letter of Intention" at their own discretion. This document can be maintained in the Lead Beneficiary's Project Proposal file to guarantee the interest and support of each beneficiary for the project, as well as to authorize the Lead Beneficiary to submit the Project Proposal.

4. Are the submitted project proposals assessed by Priority or by Specific Objective?

The project proposals that are submitted are assessed and scored per Specific Objective, rather than per Priority. If a potential beneficiary submits multiple proposals under the same Specific Objective, all proposals will be reviewed separately. However, in this case, the proposals will be competing against each other for the best score.

5. Do we have to choose only one Specific Objective or can we submit our proposal to more than one Specific Objective at the same time?

Potential applicants are invited to submit their project proposal under one of the Specific Objectives of the Programme. Projects must be developed and follow a clear intervention logic resulting from addressing a specific territorial challenge or need. Through the planned activities a specific change in the intervention field and in the areas involved is sought. This result-oriented approach of the project must be consistent with the intervention logic of the Programme, in particular with the results and indicators expected to be achieved under the Specific Objective identified in the Application form.

Project proposals under more than one Specific Objectives will be rejected.

For further details, please consult "Section B: Development and submission of a project proposal" of the Programme and Project Implementation Manual.

6. Is the project proposal required to contribute to all Programme Output Indicators for the relevant Specific Objective?

When developing a project proposal, it's important to define the outputs and output indicators that correspond to the activities. These should be selected from a list that's defined by the Programme per Specific Objective. In addition, the partnership scheme should develop a system of project indicators that align with the objectives, activities, and outcomes of the project. This system should also take into account the expectations of the Programme. To properly prepare a proposal, applicants should consult Annex 10 of the Applicants' Package. This annex includes Indicator Identity Sheets that provide detailed information on the content, calculation method, and more.

For further details, please consult "**Section B: Development and submission of a project proposal**" of the Programme and Project Implementation Manual.

7. Is the capitalization of already co-financed projects that demonstrate added value and transferability eligible as a capitalization action?

Capitalization of the results of previous periods and projects is welcome. However, cases that may constitute double funding should be excluded.

8. What can be the maximum duration of a project?

The maximum duration of a project must be 24 months after the signing of the Subsidy Contract. There is no minimum limit. In any case, the timetable of the project is part of the assessment process at Stage B.

9. Is there a limit on the number of proposals a Beneficiary can submit in the 1st Call? Is the limit related to a specific category of Beneficiary (e.g. Lead Beneficiary or Beneficiary)?

Each potential Beneficiary may participate in up to five (5) total Project Proposals in this Call. The above limit applies:

- (a) at the level of the institution/organisation (and not at the level of its Units, Departments or Directorates);
- (b) irrespective of the role of the Beneficiary in the proposals (Lead Partner/Partner); and
- (c) at the level of the Call and not at the level of the Priority or Specific Objective.

If a potential beneficiary is involved in more than five (5) project proposals, only the first five (5) proposals submitted through the MIS will be assessed. The rest of the project proposals will be rejected and not be assessed.

10. Is there any limitation of words or characters in the Concept Note Template?

As far as the length of the Concept Note is concerned, there is no word or character limit on the length of the Concept Note. Nevertheless, in general, the concept note is a summary of the project proposal with specific implementation data. Therefore, all parts of the Concept Note must be answered briefly, concisely and comprehensively.

11. Are there specific parts/questions of the Concept Note, to which we need to pay attention?

All sections of the concept note are required to be filled out. Potential applicants before submitting the template, should study carefully the concept note evaluation grid (Annex 14b) and check that all questions are answered positively.

12. Should all beneficiaries be registered in MIS?

For the submission of the Concept Note (Stage A), only the Lead Beneficiary is necessary to be registered in the MIS. However, for the submission of the Application Form – at the STAGE B' of the procedure – all Beneficiaries should be registered in the MIS.

13. What documents are required for the Lead Beneficiary to submit attached to the concept note?

In Stage A of Concept Note only the Concept Note should be submitted. All required documentation for project proposals, which are approved in Stage A, will be submitted in Stage B. However, during the organization's registration in MIS (Body Code procedure) and before the submission of the Application Form/Concept Note, beneficiaries must provide in MIS, by uploading files in the attachment section, information and documentation about the organization and the natural person representing/participating in the organization. (Annex 16 of Programme and Project Implementation Manual).

14. Is there a restriction to what type of activities will be included in each Work Package?

Management costs concerning the administrative activities to be implemented for the efficient management and coordination of the project should be included only in **WP1** of the Application Form.

Communication costs related to the actions for carrying out the external communication of the project efforts and outputs, dissemination of results, etc. should be included only in **WP2** of the Application Form.

All activities to be implemented outside the Programme area should be described in a single dedicated WP in the Application Form.

15. If it is possible, please guide us how we can find or identify partners who are as interested as us in realizing projects through Interreg Greece-Albania.

We advise you to register as "Potential Partners" in our website [<https://greece-albania.eu/register/>], so that you will be able to use the dedicated online forums per Specific

Objective [<https://greece-albania.eu/forums/>] to register your project idea and view other potential partners' ideas. Via the same tool (forum) you can also seek partners for your potential project proposal.

In addition, it would be useful to participate at the Info-Days of the 1st Call [<https://greece-albania.eu/news-events/#events>] to be held on 6 March 2024 in Greece and on 12 & 13 March in Albania, in order to meet other potential partners and get informed about the application related procedures.

Eligibility of applicants

17. Who is eligible to participate in the 1st Call for Proposals?

Eligible applicants for the present Call for Project Proposals are:

A: National, regional, local public bodies,

B: Bodies governed by public law, as defined in Article 2(4) of Directive 2014/24/EU,

C: Bodies governed by private law - non-profit organizations -under the conditions as a whole that:

a) they are **not** established to obtain profit;

b) they do **not** distribute profits to the shareholders;

c) they should have at least completed **one** accounting year of operation before the launch of the specific call for proposals. This rule is also applicable to the local-regional branch offices.

D: International organizations registered under the national law of the Partner States of the Programme if they fulfil the criteria foreseen for the non-profit bodies governed by private law. International organisations operating under international law are **not** eligible.

E: European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) governed by the law of one of the participating countries, where the EGTC has its registered office. EGTCs located outside the Programme area and not registered in one of the Partner States participating in the cross-border Programme are **not** eligible.

Potential Beneficiaries of categories B, C, E should have at least completed **one** accounting year of operation before the launching of the Call for proposals.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and other profit-making organisations are not considered eligible under this Call.

During the Stage A-Concept Note, potential beneficiaries are requested to declare their eligibility and provide the necessary information by filling out the respective fields in the Concept Note template. The eligibility of each beneficiary who has applied for a project proposal will be evaluated at Stage B/Phase B3 of the assessment process, based on the Selection Criteria.

18. Are organisations/bodies located outside the cross-border cooperation area of the Programme eligible to participate in a project proposal?

In general, to be eligible to participate in projects of the "Greece-Albania" Cooperation Programme, an organization must be established in the relevant cross-border region, which consists of Regions of Western Macedonia, Epirus and Ionian Islands from Greece and Regions of Berat, Gjirokastër, Fier, Korçë and Vlorë from Albania.

However, there are exceptions for:

- a. Beneficiaries located outside the Programme area, but having local/regional branches in the Programme area (operating in the last 12 months from the date of submission of the project proposal);
- b. Central government bodies located outside the Programme area, such as ministries or other governmental authorities with specific responsibilities at a national level.

- c. Bodies located outside the Programme area but within Greece or Albania, provided that their participation brings added value and experience to the implementation of the project and benefits the Programme's cooperation area.

Therefore, each potential Beneficiary should consider whether it falls into one of the three categories mentioned above.

During the Stage A-Concept Note, potential beneficiaries are requested to declare their eligibility and provide the necessary information by filling out the respective fields in the Concept Note template. The eligibility of each beneficiary who has applied for a project proposal will be evaluated at Stage B/Phase B3 of the assessment process, based on the Selection Criteria.

19. I would like to ask whether an NGO whose base is in Athens, but has a branch in Arta, within the eligible cross-border area, can apply as a partner for a Greece-Albania Interreg project.

In principle, to become a project beneficiary, the legal address of the beneficiary's organisation has to be located in the eligible area of the Programme with the exception of:

- organisations located outside the Programme area but having local/regional subsidiary/branch office established in the Programme area;

According to the 1st Call, If a body governed by public law or a private organization is participating through a branch located in the Programme area, the branch must be operational for at least 12 months before the launching of the Call for Proposals..

20. Are Universities located outside the Greece-Albania Programme Area eligible to participate in a Project proposal?

In addition to the previous answer, if a university located outside the Programme area wishes to participate as a beneficiary, they must prove that their participation adds value and expertise to the project and benefits the Programme cooperation area, according to the third case in the above question (C. Bodies located outside the Programme area). As a general rule, universities are expected to carry out their activities within the Programme area.

21. Under which conditions can a European Territorial Cooperation Agency (EGTC) be considered eligible?

To be eligible an EGTC must operate under the law of one of the participating Programme countries (Greece & Albania), where the EGTC has its registered office.

An EGTC located outside the Programme area and not registered in one of the Partner States participating in the cross-border programme (Greece & Albania) is **not** eligible for funding.

An EGTC cannot be the sole beneficiary of a project proposal.

22. Under which conditions can an International Organisation participate in this Call?

International Organisations, operating under the national law of the Programme Partner States, may be considered eligible if they meet all the criteria laid down for non-profit organisations governed by private law:

- a) they are **not** established to obtain profit;
- b) they do **not** distribute profits to the shareholders;
- c) they should have at least completed **one** accounting year of operation before the launch of the specific call for proposals. This rule is also applicable to the local-regional branch offices.

International organizations operating under international law are not eligible.

23. What is the optimum number of beneficiaries? Is the participation of local or central governmental bodies compulsory or highly recommended?

The minimum number of participants in a project proposal is (2) – one of each partner country – and the maximum number of participants in a project proposal is five (5). The number and the type of beneficiaries within these limits depend on the scope of the project, the activities proposed for financing and the authorization of the participating organizations and will be assessed during the evaluation procedure.

24. How is the beneficiary defined? Can it be a research laboratory, a research institute or the whole Foundation?

The threshold for participation in this call is set at the level of the institution/organization (and not at the level of its Units, Departments or Directorates). In the case of Universities or Research Centers, the University or Research Centre is considered to be the beneficiary.

25. I would like to ask whether University departments are eligible Project Beneficiaries even if they do not have a separate bank account at their own disposal but their budgets are part of the faculty's' budget?

Universities may participate in the Greece-Albania Programme at University level.

26. May a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with relatively low financial capacity participate in the "Greece-Albania" Programme as a Beneficiary?

Each Potential Project Beneficiary must submit specific documents to demonstrate its eligibility and administrative and financial capacity. The partnership and the administrative and financial capacity of the Project Partners are part of the assessment process at Stage B.

27. May an entity participate in a partnership as an associated partner with or without a budget?

Associated partners cannot participate in this call.

28. Are there specific criteria for the appointment of a Lead Beneficiary?

Lead Beneficiary will be designated by all partners participating in a project to ensure implementation of the entire project (carry out the tasks laid down in Article 26 of Interreg Regulation) and will sign a Subsidy Contract with the Managing Authority.

The Lead Beneficiary must:

- i) be established in one of the Partner States of the Greece-Albania Programme.
- ii) be a legal entity.
- iii) hold a dedicated bank account for the project.
- iv) be legally able to transfer funds to foreign countries.
- v) have the financial capacity and administrative ability to manage the joint project

No specific requirements have been set by the Call regarding the type of entity and therefore the Lead Beneficiary may be an entity belonging to any of the eligible categories of Beneficiaries.

29. ONLY FOR GREEK BENEFICIARIES - May Municipalities, Universities and other bodies conclude Programming Agreements (προγραμματικές συμβάσεις) in Greece-Albania Programme?

The case of assuming responsibility for the implementation of a Project instead of the owner of the project, by another body, is provided for in Article 8, point 3 of the YPASVD of INTERREG Programmes 2021-2027 (Government Gazette 3281/Issue B'/17.05.2023), as follows:

"In the cases of actions for which the responsibility for the implementation of the action is assumed by another entity as beneficiary instead of the project owner based on a programming agreement, in accordance with article 44 of Law 4412/2016, as it applies each time, the eligible costs are paid for the project by the project owner or by the beneficiary, depending on what is specified in the programming contract,...".

Furthermore, the YPASVD lists in detail (points a to h) the conditions that must be met in order the relevant Programming Agreement and the costs derived from it to be eligible.

In addition, article 44 of Law 4412/2016 states that:

"Article 44. Technical competence of contracting authorities in public works contracts and studies

1. The contracting authorities who judge that they do not have technical competence, or their technical competence is incomplete, may in particular:

- a) enter into a programming agreement, within the meaning of paragraph 6 of Article 12, for concluding, supervising, and overseeing a public procurement for work or study,
- b) conclude contracts for the provision of technical services within the meaning of article 52 and
- c) be supported by the EKAA of par. 1a of article 41 in the context of its exercise of ancillary purchasing activities.

3. The contracting authority is responsible to the project owner for the proper performance of its duties and to third parties it is jointly and severally liable with the project owner. If the programming

agreement does not specify otherwise, it represents the project owner in court and out of court against third parties during the exercise of its duties until the end of the contract. The ruling bodies are determined by the programming agreement."

Therefore, from the above, it is clear that **the conclusion of Programming Agreements is allowed only in cases in which conditions of Article 44 of Law 4412/2016 are met and exclusively for the services described in paragraph 1a of Article 44.**

More specifically, the following should apply cumulatively:

- a) documented non-existence or inadequate existence of Technical Competency of a Contracting Authority/ potential Beneficiary,
- b) assumption of responsibility by another body, exclusively for the services referred to in Article 44 par.1, i.e. "for concluding, supervising and overseeing a public procurement for work or study", and not for the provision of other services.

The potential Beneficiary should document, during the submission of the proposal in Stage B, the need to conclude a Programming Agreement in the context of the above.

In Project Selection Criteria for the evaluation of project proposals for funding are included criteria concerning the ability of the potential Beneficiaries to respond to the implementation of the projects, in which case the above approach should be taken into account during the process of submitting the proposals that will include Programming Agreements.

30. Is there a minimum or maximum requirement for the number of output and result indicators a project must have? Are there expected target numbers for each project?

There are no maximum or minimum requirements for the number of selected indicators that a project proposal must have. However, the output and result indicators selected and analyzed by the potential beneficiaries are crucial for the successful assessment of the project proposal and in particular: During the evaluation of the Stage A – see Concept Note Evaluation Grid, criterion 11, and during the evaluation of the Stage B – see Quality Assessment Phase B2, part A2 criterion (a) & (b)

Eligibility of Expenditure & Financing

31. What is the period of eligibility for expenditure?

The period of eligibility for expenditure of a project starts with the signature of the Subsidy Contract and lasts until the date of closure of the project.

However, in case the activities of the project started their implementation before the signature of the Subsidy Contract and in any case after 01/01/2021, they must not have been completed before the submission of the Application form at Stage B of this Call for Proposals to be considered eligible.

The closing date of the eligibility period should be the end date of the signed Subsidy Contract, in force. Under no circumstances the final date of eligibility for expenditure can exceed the 31st of December 2029.

32. Are preparation costs eligible? What is the limitation? Does the restriction apply at the level of the beneficiary or the project? Will they be calculated based on real costs or based on simplified costs?

Preparation Costs within the budget lines “staff costs, travel and accommodation costs and external expertise and services”, which have been incurred for the preparation of the project proposal, between 1st of January 2021 and the date of submission of the Application Form are eligible for funding.

Preparation Costs must not exceed in total the amount of €30.000 at the project level. The relative amount will be reimbursed on a real cost basis.

33. The existence of a commitment decision, which is referred to in the Programme and Project Manual (g. Special Categories of costs and budget limits) as a condition for the eligibility of preparation costs, how is it reflected as a document in the case of a Municipality that wants to award the preparation of a project proposal to an external expert? Is it the decision of the City Council? Finance Committee?

For the above external expertise services, the public procurement procedure should be followed in compliance with the applicable legislation. Therefore, a signed contract, an award decision, etc. could be considered as a commitment decision.

34. Is it possible to create additional budget lines (category of expenditure) than those foreseen?

No, project budgets must be built according to the following predefined six (6) budget lines:

- 1) Staff costs
- 2) Office and administration costs
- 3) Travel and accommodation expenses
- 4) External expertise and service costs

5) Equipment costs

6) Infrastructure and works

When submitting at Stage A the concept note in the MIS, it is important to note that there is an additional budget line called "Cost based on Concept Note", which must be selected exclusively on the MIS Application Form. This is required at Stage A only for technical reasons and the total budget for the Project Proposal should be completed in this budget line. For further information, kindly refer to the MIS Guides.

35. Is it possible for a Potential Beneficiary to choose a different method of cost calculation for staff costs, office and administration costs and travel and accommodation? In the same proposal may some Beneficiaries calculate staff, office and administration and travel costs on a real cost basis and others on a simplified cost basis? i.e., is the method of calculation the choice of each beneficiary?

The method of calculating expenditure shall be chosen by each beneficiary at the level of the category of expenditure and shall apply for the entire duration of the operation. In this context, a beneficiary can choose, for example, a simplified cost method for the expenditure category " Staff costs " and a real cost method for the expenditure category " Travel and accommodation costs ".

Another beneficiary of the same project may make different choices for the calculation of its costs.

However, the above choices shall be binding on the beneficiary concerned for the entire duration of the operation.

36. Is the VAT of costs eligible?

VAT is eligible for all projects with a budget of less than €5.000.000 for all categories of Beneficiaries. The maximum budget of a project proposal in the 1st Call is 1.500.000,00 € (incl. EU & National Funds).

37. Are there any modalities for the distribution of the budget between the Work Packages?

The specific budget limits are set out in the Terms and Conditions of the 1st Call for Project Proposals and in the Programme & Project Implementation Guide/ Section B: Project Development and must be respected by all Potential Beneficiaries of the Project. More specifically,

- Expenditure under the categories 'Staff costs, travel and accommodation expenses, external expertise and services' incurred during the preparation of the operation is eligible for co-financing as Preparation Costs, provided that it does not exceed EUR 30 000 at the level of the project

-The costs of management activities for the efficient management and coordination of the project should not exceed 15% of the Lead beneficiary's budget. For each Beneficiary, this percentage shall be limited to 10% of its budget.

- Office and administrative costs may not exceed 4% of the total budget of each beneficiary

- Costs of communication actions for carrying out the dissemination of the project outputs and results cannot exceed 15% of the total project budget.

38. Are there any country-specific travel, accommodation and daily allowance rates that are required to be taken into account when developing the project budget?

These rates are determined by the national laws of the countries participating in the Greece-Albania Programme and may vary depending on the legal status of each Project Partner.