

**Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme 2014/2020**

**Project "Participatory model for the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources and for cross border habitats, biodiversity and ecosystem services safeguard" – “BLUE LAND”, Project Number 59**

**CALL FOR IDEAS FOR THE SAFEGUARDING AND VALORISATION OF ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES IN THE “BLUE LAND” AREA**

## 1. About the “BLUE LAND” project

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department for fisheries, with five project partners: National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA), Tirana, Albania; Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA), Tirana, Albania; University of Montenegro, Institute of Marine Biology, Montenegro; International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies - Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM-IAMB), Bari, Italy; Cooperative Research Institute (ICR), Lecce, Italy; and two associated partners: Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, Roma, Italy, and Department of Agriculture, Rural development and Environmental protection of the Apulia Region, Bari, Italy, has been implementing the project “Participatory model for the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources and for cross border habitats, biodiversity and ecosystem services safeguard.” (Project acronym “BLUE LAND”), co-financed by the European Union within INTERREG IPA CBC Italy–Albania–Montenegro Programme.

The common challenge of the INTERREG IPA CBC Italy–Albania–Montenegro Programme area is related to environmental protection, with special emphasis on how to develop cross border cooperation strategies on water landscapes. The programme area is missing common models, developed according to EU standards, for the safeguard and sustainable use of local biodiversity and marine and inland water landscapes.

The “BLUE LAND” project overall objective is to define, develop and implement a participatory and ecosystem-based model for the protection and safeguard of marine and coastal resources, habitats, biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (ESs) that could represent a form of management comparable to that of a Marine Protected Area (MPA), with the added benefit of broad ownership of the goals within the local community and lighter procedure in the recognition and implementation of management policies.

The main “BLUE LAND” project outputs are:

• A common, replicable model for participatory and ecosystem-based management of biodiversity and ESs in the “BLUE LANDs” with an established cross border “BLUE LAND” Implementation Group;

• Characterization and mapping of 3 ESs, and 3 environmental and socioeconomic tabular and spatial databases;

• IT tools for supporting data collection, monitoring and sharing;

• 3 functioning “BLUE LANDs” for the protection of biodiversity, safeguard and sustainable use of the related ESs.

“BLUE LAND” partners, cooperatives, fishermen associations, local Protected Area, citizens and all relevant local stakeholders will benefit from the outputs achieved.

The project represents a new approach to the management and governance of marine and coastal resources, so as to foster mechanisms for the involvement of local communities in biodiversity protection. The added value of cross border cooperation will be mainly linked to the teamwork and the contribution of each partner to the shared definition of plans and the application of methodologies.

The project implementation started on 03/04/2018 and its duration is until 31/12/2020 (with possible extension if requested from and approved by the Managing Authority of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme).

## 2. Presentation of the "Call for ideas"

For the success and achievement of the project’s objectives, the involvement of local communities is essential not only in decision-making, but also in participatory monitoring actions, following the citizen science approach. This activity, carried out in Montenegro by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development seeks to reinforce the active participation of the public and the stakeholders securing their long-term commitment.

The “BLUE LAND” management plans will be prepared on the basis of previous environmental and socioeconomic analyses and indications expressed by stakeholders, resulting from local interests and needs but in accordance with national laws and regulations, and thus would be able to meet the needs of preservation of the ecosystems, while still allowing the usability of resources, by regulating human activities and planning appropriate development strategies.

In line with the fully participatory approach undertook by the Project, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development launched this "Call for ideas" for small pilot project (similar are to be developed in Italy and Albania). These pilot actions will be geared towards the protection and enhancement of the identified ESs, resulting in a positive impact on the entire territory, thus enhancing environmental protection and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources in the “BLUE LAND”.

##  3. Objective of the "Call for ideas"

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In the previous period of the project, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has implemented activities on the participation path with the involvement of the stakeholders of “BLUE LAND” area, encompassing right branch of the river Bojana up to its mouth into the Adriatic Sea, Velika plaža to the Port of Milena with the hinterland to the regional road R-17, including coastal wetlands and sand dunes of the river Bojana (Municipality of Ulcinj), aimed at the identification of most relevant ecosystem services[[1]](#footnote-1) and which characterize the context of the pilot action in the perception of citizens. This path has led not only to identify and give an order of priority to the ecosystem services that the community feels the most important at the moment, but also the identification of concrete actions that will ensure the continuity of benefits on the territory.

Among all the ecosystem services considered, priority for the sustainable development of the land, the community has deemed essential to the preservation and the strengthening of the following:

1. Natural heritage of high conservation value. This is an ecosystem service of culture type that identifies, among the elements living (biotic factors) that make up the nature capital, the elements that it believes necessary to keep;

2. Natural heritage of high value for the future cultural heritage. This is an ecosystem service of culture type that identifies, among the biotic factors, the elements useful to preserve the cultural heritage for the generations to come. This ecosystem service includes all the non-material benefits that come from the use of the territory (ecosystem) which have a symbolic, cultural or intellectual meaning for the community that lives there.

The preservation of the natural heritage to preserve cultural heritage is an extremely important environmental benefit for the sustainable development of the area. The priority accorded to these two ecosystem services emphasizes not only the importance that the capital of natural and cultural heritage that comes from places involved in the perception of stakeholders of the area, but that the awareness of the local communities goes well beyond the simple appreciation the value of nature and makes reference to the importance that the nature has for the generations future in terms of cultural heritage.

Both the Ecosystem Services to which the local community has given priority over others are part of the cultural benefits that people get from ecosystems in terms of enriching spiritual development cognitive, reflection, recreation and aesthetics experience.

The present "Call for Ideas" is aimed, therefore, to the enhancement and preservation of ecosystem services described for the pilot area: right branch of the river Bojana up to its mouth into the Adriatic Sea, Velika plaža to the Port of Milena with the hinterland to the regional road R-17, including coastal wetlands and sand dunes of the river Bojana (Municipality of Ulcinj).

Below is a list as an example, and therefore not exhaustive, of the possible actions in favour of safeguarding the ecosystem services eligible under this "Call for Ideas":

• Creation, recovery or making safe structures to the degree to improve the places of higher natural heritage, symbolic, cultural or intellectual meaning, for the people that live at or visit the territory (e.g. walkways, piers, etc.);

• Creation of paths led to aim the educational and information on biodiversity coastline, the elements of nature and the history of the places;

• Creation of posters spread to the increase of knowledge and the awareness of citizens on the value of nature and the environment of the ecosystems of the pilot;

• Identification and creation of paths and paths that combine naturalistic elements with the cultural heritage of the places;

• Activities aimed at the capacity building of the community of the “BLUE LAND” (e.g. fishermen, local organizations...) compliant with the “BLUE LAND” project objectives;

• Activities following already implemented projects as continuation, added value or capitalization, compliant with the “BLUE LAND” project objectives.

## 4. Documentation provided to applicants

All applicants wishing to participate in this "Call for Ideas" may download the following documents from the internet site of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development:

a) "Call for Ideas" guidelines for applicants;

b) Application Form (Annex 1);

c) Eligible intervention area of the pilot project under this "Call for ideas" (Annex 2).

## 5. Implementation period of the project awarded under this "Call for ideas"

The project will be implemented until 21/12/2020 (10 days prior to the end of implementation of the “BLUE LAND” project, planned for the 31/12/2020), subject to further possible extension, if requested from and approved by the Management Authority of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. The possible granting of the extension will be promptly communicated by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to stakeholders, the entity submitted successful project idea and successful tenderers.

## 6. Financing

The financial resources available are EUR 30,000.

The estimated value of projects presented must have a minimum amount of EUR 10,000 and a maximum equal to € 30,000.

## 7. Funding mode of the project awarded under this "Call for ideas"

"Call for ideas" is not call for proposals for grants, since the sub granting is not foreseen under the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme. All the procurement procedures will be conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in compliance with the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme regulations. An entity proposed awarded project idea will be invited to implement the project (resulting from a winning project idea) in partnership (without financial compensation) with the Ministry.

## 8. Eligible applicants

In order to be eligible applicant under this "Call for ideas" must:

* be a legal person or an entity without legal personality or a natural person and
* be non-profit-making and
* be established in Montenegro.

E.g. the applicants may be in the form of:

• Local authority;

• Public body (public sector operator);

• Non-Governmental Organisation (Foundation or Association);

• Social institution;

• University, faculty or research institution;

• International organization with a registered office in Montenegro;

• Ecclesiastical body, etc.

The applicants may apply in single or associated form. In the event of participation in an associated form, the responsible partner must be appointed.

Applicants may submit a single or several project ideas for the funding.

## 9. Non-eligible applicants

Applicant will be ineligible if:

a) participated, or which employees, participated in the drafting of the “Call for ideas” and attached documents;

b) find themselves in the exclusion criteria from participation:

- it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant

is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions

in accordance with the applicable law;

- it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful conduct which has an impact on its professional credibility where such conduct denotes a wrongful intent or gross negligence;

- it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following: fraud, corruption, conduct related to a criminal organisation, money laundering or terrorist financing, terrorist-related offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, child labour or other forms of trafficking in human beings.

- has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract financed by the EU, which has led to the early termination of a legal commitment or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties or which has been discovered following checks and audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;

- it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity on the protection of the European Communities financial interests.

All the applicants must allow, without reserve, verification of the eligibility for participation if the Ministry requires.

## 10. Ineligible activities

Following activities will be ineligible:

a) Under no circumstances may be proposed activity or part of the activity which is already funded or for which funding is already secured;

b) Activities which are no compliant with the objectives of the “Call for ideas”;

c) Activity which may be a subject or result of the conflict of interest;

d) Activities which will obviously result in a financial/material benefit of an individual, small group of individuals or profitable entity;

e) Activities which will result in a major financial/material benefit of public servant, their spouses or relatives.

## 11. Authorizations/licenses/permissions

Where it is necessary to obtain authorization/licence/permission issued by a competent authority (e.g. Municipality) for activities planned within project idea, e.g. for provision of services, supply and installation of goods or performance of works (e.g. construction/redevelopment/renovation) should be already available or obtainable within 1 month from the date of awarding the approval to the proposed project idea.

## 12. Criteria for the evaluation

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with the possible assistance of external assessors/stakeholders. The proceedings of the evaluation exercise are confidential and all parties involved are bound to adhere to the principles of confidentiality, impartiality and no conflict of interest.

All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Sections 9-11, the application may be rejected on this sole basis.

During the opening and administrative check the following will be assessed:

* If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application may be automatically rejected.
* If the application satisfies the criteria specified in the “Call for ideas”. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the Ministry may contact applicant for clarification.

The application that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The application will receive an overall score out of 100 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below.

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| --- | --- |
| **Evaluation criteria** | **Maximum points** |
| **1. Relevance of the action** | **30** |
| 1.1. How relevant is the proposed project idea to the objectives, priorities and the areas of intervention of the “Call for ideas”? Ideas characterized by an effective capacity of enhancement and preservation of both the ecosystem services will have cumulative effect. | 10 |
| 1.2 How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs of the relevant area and/or sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)? | 5 |
| 1.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? | 5 |
| 1.4 Is the community involved (with the goal of development of sense of appropriation and the awareness increase)? | 5 |
| 1.5 Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices) in its function of safeguarding and protection of ecosystem services and continuity of benefits on the territory? | 5 |
| **2. Design of the action** | **15** |
| 2.1. How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposed project idea indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)? | 10 |
| 2.2 Does the design of the idea reflect an analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? | 5 |
| **3. Feasibility and implementation approach** | **20** |
| 3.1. Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic? | 10 |
| 3.2 Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)? | 5 |
| 3.3 Is the applicant's level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory? | 5 |
| **4. Sustainability of the action** | **20** |
| 4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups? | 5 |
| 4.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing? | 5 |
| 4.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable:- Financially (e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs);- Institutionally (will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local ‘ownership’ of the results of the action?)- Environmentally? | 10 |
| **5. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action** | **15** |
| 5.1. Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? | 5 |
| 5.2. Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory? | 10 |
| **Maximum total score** | **100** |

The special attention would be given to a proposed project idea from organizations that:

a) Carry out activities consistent with the purpose of the pilot project as their regular activities for which they are registered;

b) Demonstrated competence and experience in any of the fields or in the territory of intervention, and who have gained previous experience of collaboration with the other subjects of the partnership;

c) Have the legal headquarters and/or operating in the Montenegro, preferably located close to the intervention territory.

## 13. Clarification on the "Call for ideas" procedure

Applicants may submit questions in writing to the following address up to one day before the deadline for submission of applications, specifying the publication reference/title “CALL FOR IDEAS FOR THE SAFEGUARDING AND VALORISATION OF ECOSYSTEMS SERVICES IN THE “BLUE LAND” AREA”:

Ms Nada Kosić

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Rimski Trg 46, 81000 Podgorica

Fax No. +382 20 234 306

E-mail nada.kosic@mpr.gov.me

Questions and answers will be regularly published at the internet site of this “Call for ideas”.

## 14. Submission of applications

Applications for project ideas should be received before 14/10/2020, 10:00.

Applications may be submitted in Montenegrin or English:

• in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) at the address

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Rimski trg 46, 81000 Podgorica, Montenegro

• OR sent via e-mail to the following address: nada.kosic@mpr.gov.me.

The outer envelope should provide the following information:

a) the address for submitting application indicated above;

b) the publication reference/title of the “Call for ideas” procedure;

c) the name of the applicant.

The e-mail subject line envelope should provide the following information:

a) the publication reference/title of the “Call for ideas” procedure;

## 15. General rules

By submitting the application, applicants accept all the conditions provided for by this initiative and by its attachments, as well as the final and unappeasable decision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In the evaluation phase Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development reserves the right to carry out inspections and requests meetings to further assessment and/or request clarifications from the applicant.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will give notice of the outcome of the evaluation to all the applicants by the appropriate communication. The list of the selected project ideas will be published on the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (“Call for ideas”) website.

The implementation of the project will start within 1 month from the awarding project(s) under this "Call for ideas".

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development may withdraw the assignment of the contribution to the project if any severe failure encounter as part of the partnership (therein including the person responsible) or eligibility of the partner or activities.

Severe failure, for example, may be considered lack of a necessary authorization/licence/permission issued by a competent authority for the performance of works (e.g. construction / redevelopment / renovation) within the foreseen time frame and / or the untruthfulness of the information provided.

## 14. Data Protection

By submitting the application, applicants consent to the processing of their personal data (including those sensitive) solely for the purposes of the evaluation, management and monitoring of the “Call for ideas”.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development undertakes to process personal data in compliance with Montenegrin legislation and EU Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725 - General Data Protection Regulation and subsequent additions.

1. "The multiple benefits provided by ecosystems to mankind" (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment - 2005) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)