

**Contracting authority**:

Ministry of Finance of Montenegro - Directorate for Finance and Contracting of the EU Assistance Funds

**Cross Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro - Albania 2014-2020**

under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2014-2020 (IPA II)

Guidelines for grant applicants

Budget lines IPA 2016 & 2017

Reference: EuropeAid/162-527/ID/ACT/ME

Deadline for submission of concept note and full application: 27th May 2019

Notice

This is an open call for proposals, where all documents are submitted together (concept note and full application). In the first instance, only the concept notes will be evaluated. Thereafter, for the lead applicants who have been pre-selected, the full applications will be evaluated. After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed ‘declaration by the lead applicant’ sent together with the full application.

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1. Cross-border programme Montenegro – ALBANIA 2014-2020
   1. Background

These guidelines are intended to be used by those applying for grants under the 2nd call for proposals for the 2014-2020 cross-border cooperation programme Montenegro – Albania(hereinafter ‘the programme’). The programme is implemented under the framework of the instrument of pre-accession assistance (IPA II) and is the result of joint planning efforts made by the governments and other stakeholders of the two countries. IPA II supports cross-border cooperation with a view to promoting good neighbourly relations, fostering European Union integration and promoting socio-economic development. The legal provisions for its implementation are stipulated in the following pieces of legislation:

* Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II);
* Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action; and
* Commission Implementing Regulation EU no 447/2014 of 2 May 2014 on the specific rules for implementing the IPA II regulation.

The programme analyses the socio-economic situation of the border region, sets out a common strategy for remedying problems identified and formulates joint thematic priorities for development. As specified in its programme document, its implementation is carried out through calls for proposals such as this one. These calls will be launched at regular intervals in order to fund cross-border cooperation projects that will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives agreed upon by the participating countries.

More details about this 2014-2020 IPA II cross-border cooperation programme can be found on the web page <https://www.cbc-mne-alb.org/documents/programme-documents> and are available for download on the web page of the website of the OS in Montenegro<https://www.eu.me/mn/ipa/dokumenti/category/15-ipa-ii>, and on the web page of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania (Operating Structure): [www.punetejashtme.gov.al](http://www.punetejashtme.gov.al), as well as at: <http://historiku.integrimi.gov.al/al/dokumente/bashkepunimi-nderkufitar-dhe-transnacional/programi-ipa-cbc-mali-i-zi-shqiperi&page=1>.

The programme is implemented jointly by both countries. In Montenegro, the responsible institutions are:

* Government of Montenegro, European Integration Office, in charge of the overall coordination of the programme, is the operating structure (OS) in this country;
* Ministry of Finance of Montenegro - Directorate for Finance and Contracting of the EU Assistance Funds, responsible for launching of Calls for Proposals and all contract and payment issues, is the contracting authority (CA).

In Albania, the responsible institutions are:

* Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, responsible for the overall coordination of the programme, is the OS in this country.
* Ministry of Finance and Economy, Central Finance and Contracting Unit (CFCU), as integral part of the management and control system (control body) in this country.

Moreover, the implementation of the programme is overseen by a joint monitoring committee (JMC) composed of officials from both participating countries’ institutions. The JMC will examine and provide an advisory opinion on the list of operations selected through this call for proposals before the grant award decision.

The CA, the OSs and the JMC are assisted by the joint technical secretariat (JTS) based in Montenegro. The JTS is the administrative body responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme including support and advice to potential applicants as well as grant beneficiaries. The JTS has an antenna located in Shkoder, Albania. The JTS will assist potential applicants in partner search and project development, organising information days and workshops; develop and maintain a network of stakeholders; advise grant beneficiaries in project implementation; and prepare, conduct and report on monitoring visits to cross-border cooperation operations.

* 1. Objectives of the programme and priority issues

In line with the objectives specified in the programme document, the **overall objective** of this call for proposals is to promote/strengthen good neighbourly relations and socioeconomic development of the border regions, through the environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive economic development, with respect for its common cultural and natural heritage.

As a result of a decision made by the JMC of the programme on 13 April 2018, out of the three thematic priorities of the programme document,

* Priority 1:Encouraging tourism, culture and natural heritage
* Priority 2:Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management
* Priority 3:Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across the border

The following are the specific objectives and the corresponding results that the applications submitted under this call will contribute to attaining:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **THEMATIC PRIORITIES** | **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES** | **RESULTS** |
| 1. Protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management | 1. The protection of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is furthered | Result 2.1- Awareness of the sustainable use of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is advanced |
| 1. Promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across the border | 1. Employability and social inclusion is fostered | Result 3.1- Access to the labour market improved, especially for vulnerable groups |

* 1. Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 2,890,000.00. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

More specifically, the contracting authority might cancel the call completely or partially when only few good quality applications can be contracted and relaunch the unallocated assets in the next call for the specific objective(s) concerned.

**Indicative EU-funded allocations by specific objective:**

| **Specific objective** | **Allocation** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. The protection of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is furthered | **EUR 1,890,000.00** |
| 1. Employability and social inclusion is fostered | **EUR 1,000,000.00** |
| **Total** | **EUR 2,890,000.00** |

The applications will compete with each other for the financial resources available within each specific objective separately.

When the remaining funds per specific objective will not allow financing another application, the evaluation committee may recommend to the contracting authority to pull these funds and award a grant to the application or applications with the highest scores in the ranking of the separate reserve lists under the specific objective/s: “The protection of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is furthered” and “Employability and social inclusion is fostered” that is considered more important than the others under this call for proposal OR in the ranking of the sole reserve list irrespective of the specific objective.

If the allocation indicated for a specific objective cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to that/those application/s being higher in the ranking of the separate reserve lists under the specific objective/s or “The protection of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is furthered” and “Employability and social inclusion is fostered” that is considered more important than the others under this call for proposal OR in the ranking of the sole reserve list irrespective of the specific objective.

Moreover, the contracting authority may increase the funds allocated to the call in order to fund all or part of those applications qualifying for funding.

Size of grants

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Specific objective[[1]](#footnote-2)** | **Minimum amount**  **of EU-funded grant** | **Maximum amount**  **of EU-funded grant** |
| 1. The protection of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is furthered | EUR 300.000,00 | EUR 500.000,00 |
| 1. Employability and social inclusion is fostered | EUR 200.000,00 | EUR 400.000,00 |

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum percentages of total eligible costs of the action:

* Minimum percentage: 50% of the total eligible costs of the action.
* Maximum percentage: 85 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.5).

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union.

1. Rules FOR thIS call for proposalS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?locale=en>).[[2]](#footnote-3)

* 1. Eligibility criteria

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

1. the actors:

* The ‘**lead applicant’**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form (2.1.1),
* its **co-applicant(s)** (**where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as ‘applicant(s)’**) (2.1.1),
* and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)**to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s). (2.1.2);

1. the actions:

Actions for which a grant may be awarded (2.1.4);

1. the costs:

* types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (2.1.5).
  + 1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))

**Lead applicant**

(1) In order to be eligible for a grant, the lead applicant must:

* be a legal person, **and**
* be non-profit-making for the purpose of this Call (except of SMEs, which however cannot generate profit from the proposed action), **and**
* be established in[[3]](#footnote-4) either Montenegro and/ or Albania[[4]](#footnote-5), **and**
* be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary, **and**
* be a specific type of institution or organisation such as:
  + Central, Regional, Local authorities,
  + Local governments and their institutions,
  + Associations of municipalities,
  + Development agencies,
  + Local business support organizations,
  + Economic factors such as SMEs,
  + NGOs,
  + Public and private bodies supporting the workforce,
  + Vocational and technical training institutions,
  + Bodies and organization for nature protection,
  + Public bodies responsible for water management,
  + Fire/emergency services,
  + Schools, colleges, universities and research canters including vocations and technical training institutions

(2) Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide;

Lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entities and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant, the co-applicants and the affiliated entities are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion according to Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

In Part B, Section 8 of the grant application form (‘Declaration by the lead applicant’), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself, the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies)are not in any of these situations.

**The lead applicant must act with co-applicant(s) as specified hereafter**.

If awarded the grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in Annex E3h1 (special conditions). The coordinator is the main interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary and coordinates the design and implementation of the action.

The coordinator will assume the responsibility of lead beneficiary ensuring the financial implementation of the entire operation, monitor that the operation is implemented in accordance with the conditions set out in the contract and lay down the arrangements with other beneficiaries to guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid.

Each action must involve at least two beneficiaries out of which one have to be from Montenegro and one from Albania.

**Co-applicant(s)**

**The applicant must act with at least one co-applicant as specified hereafter.**

**If the applicant is established in Montenegro, at least one co-applicant must be established in Albania, and vice versa.**

**The maximum number of co-applicants that could be involved in the action is 3. This means that an application cannot have more than 4 entities involved in total.** However, CBC partners must carefully bear in mind the most appropriate conditions to ensure an intra-project efficient coordination when deciding on this. The number of partners and the composition of the partnership should be coherent with the envisaged objectives and activities of the action (see Section 2.1.4 below).

In genuine cross-border operations, the applicant and co-applicant(s) shall cooperate in the development and implementation of action. In addition, they shall cooperate in either the staffing or the financing of operation or both (see Section 2.1.4 below).The lead applicant and co-applicant(s) must represent different legal entities.

Co-applicants participate in designing and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant.

**Co-applicant(s) must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself**[[5]](#footnote-6).

**Co-applicant(s) must sign the mandate in Part B, Section 4 of the grant application form.**

**(3)** Applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG) at the  
 moment of the award decision cannot be awarded the contract[[6]](#footnote-7).

If awarded the grant contract, the co-applicant(s) will become beneficiary(ies) in the action (together with the coordinator).

* + 1. Affiliated entities

Affiliated entity(ies)

The lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) may act with affiliated entity(ies).

**Only the following entities may be considered as affiliated entities to the lead applicant and/or to co-applicant(s):**

Only entities having a structural link with the applicants (i.e. the lead applicant or a co-applicant), in particular a legal or capital link.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

(i) Control, as defined in Directive 2013/34/EU on the annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements and related reports of certain types of undertakings:

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

* Entities directly or indirectly controlled by the applicant (daughter companies or first-tier subsidiaries). They may also be entities controlled by an entity controlled by the applicant (granddaughter companies or second-tier subsidiaries) and the same applies to further tiers of control;
* Entities directly or indirectly controlling the applicant (parent companies). Likewise, they may be entities controlling an entity controlling the applicant;
* Entities under the same direct or indirect control as the applicant (sister companies).

(ii) Membership, i.e. the applicant is legally defined as a e.g. network, federation, association in which the proposed affiliated entities also participate or the applicant participates in the same entity (e.g. network, federation, association) as the proposed affiliated entities.

The structural link shall as a general rule be neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation. This means that the link would exist independently of the award of the grant; it should exist before the call for proposals and remain valid after the end of the action.

By way of exception, an entity may be considered as affiliated to an applicant even if it has a structural link specifically established for the sole purpose of the implementation of the action in the case of so-called ‘sole applicants’ or ‘sole beneficiaries’. A sole applicant or a sole beneficiary is a legal entity formed by several entities (a group of entities) which together comply with the criteria for being awarded the grant. For example, an association is formed by its members.

##### What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

* Entities that have entered into a (procurement) contract or subcontract with an applicant, act as concessionaires or delegates for public services for an applicant,
* Entities that receive financial support from the applicant,
* Entities that cooperate on a regular basis with an applicant on the basis of a memorandum of understanding or share some assets,
* Entities that have signed a consortium agreement under the grant contract (unless this consortium agreement leads to the creation of a ‘sole applicant’ as described above).

How to verify the existence of the required link with an applicant?

The affiliation resulting from control may in particular be proved on the basis of the consolidated accounts of the group of entities the applicant and its proposed affiliates belong to.

The affiliation resulting from membership may in particular be proved on the basis of the statutes or equivalent act establishing the entity (network, federation, association) which the applicant constitutes or in which the applicant participates.

If the applicants are awarded a grant contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become beneficiary(ies) of the action and signatory(ies) of the grant contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the implementation of the action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for implementation contracts and financial support to third parties) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the beneficiary(ies) under the grant contract.

Affiliated entity(ies) must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as the lead applicant and the co-applicant(s). They must sign the affiliated entity(ies) statement in Part B, Section 5 of the grant application form.

* + 1. Associates and contractors

The following entities are not applicants nor affiliated entities and do not have to sign the ‘mandate for co-applicant(s)’ or ‘affiliated entities' statement’:

* Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Part B, Section 6 — ‘Associates participating in the action’ — of the grant application form.

* Contractors

The beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are permitted to award contracts. Associates or affiliated entity(ies) cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

* + 1. ofEligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of an action under each specific objective may not be lower than 18 months nor exceed 30 months or operation will meet the following requirements depending on the programme’s specific objective addressed by the application, namely:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Specific objective** | **Minimum number of months** | **Maximum number of months** |
| 1. The protection of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is furthered | 18 | 30 |
| 1. Employability and social inclusion is fostered | 18 | 24 |

Sectors or themes

As stipulated in Section 1.2 above, actions or operations will fall under only one of the following specific objectives and will have to prove their contribution to attain one or more of their intended results:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES** | **RESULTS** |
| 1. The protection of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is furthered | Result 2.1- Awareness of the sustainable use of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is advanced |
| 1. Employability and social inclusion is fostered | Result 3.1- Access to the labour market improved, especially for vulnerable groups |

In their application, the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) will have to refer the programme’s specific objective under which their action is meant to contribute, as well as the programme’s result(-s) affected by the action, and the programme’s indicators that will be instrumental to measure the action’s success. For the sake of consistency and aggregation, applicants must have the same units to quantify their output, outcome and impact indicators in line with the programme output, outcome and impact indicators.

The following illustrates the list of indicators that the applicants will have to include, where appropriate, to estimate the project’s contribution to the programme’s objectives:

**Programme specific objective 2 - The protection of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is furthered**

| IMPACT INDICATORS | Number of direct beneficiaries involved (disaggregated by gender and age) |
| --- | --- |
| Percentage of population in the programme area having direct or indirect benefits as a result of the operation undertaken |
| Percentage of reduction of water losses in the municipal supply networks |
| Percentage of the programme area benefiting from better enforcement of water supply, wastewater, solid waste disposal and environmental protection standards |
| Percentage of the programme area benefiting from better enforcement of water supply standards |
| Percentage of the programme area benefiting from better enforcement of wastewater standards |
| Percentage of the programme area benefiting from better enforcement of solid waste disposal standards |
| Percentage of the programme area benefiting from better enforcement of environmental protection standards |
| Number of harmonised environmental education curricula and/or an extra-curricular programme introduced in secondary education on both sides of the border |
| Number of municipalities having solved/agreed waste management issues through inter-municipal (regional) initiatives |
| Number of new sites fully satisfying NATURA 2000 standards |
| Number of cross-border areas with threatened biodiversity have been protected/benefited from the actions |
| Savings (percentage reduction) in the use of water by households and businesses |
| Shkodra/Skadar Lake Basin fulfils conditions to become part of UNESCO Biosphere Reserve List protected areas |
| Percentage of waste collected for recycling |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OUTCOME INDICATORS | Percentage of increase in the amount of recycled solid waste |
| Area covered by joint management measures (ha) |
| Number of cross-border areas with threatened biodiversity protected/benefited from the actions |
| Number of water, soil and air polluters newly registered in the records of environmental agencies |
| Number of participants, as percentage from the local population, in the organized publicity events |
| Number of hectares cleaned/rehabilitated land |
| Additional population served by improved water supply and wastewater treatment, as well as solid waste collection |
| Additional population served by improved water supply |
| Additional population served by improved wastewater treatment |
| Additional population served by improved solid waste collection |
| Percentage (%) of population in the CBC area made aware of sustainable use of natural resources and environment in key sectors |
| Number of improved waste management systems and value chains within the area |
| Number of improved waste water management systems and value chains within the area |
| Number of improved solid waste management systems and value chains within the area |
| Number of recycling "yards" in the territory of municipalities established |
| No of people directly taking part in awareness raising activities |
| Number of innovative ways to present the monitoring results on environmental quality in place |
| Percentage of all businesses and organisations participating in joint actions in water and waste management (to be disaggregated) |
| Percentage of all businesses and organisations participating in joint actions in water management |
| Percentage of all businesses and organisations participating in joint actions in waste management |
| Percentage of the population of the programme area has been target of environment awareness raising activities |
| The control on the levels of pollution in the area such as Shkodra/Skadar Lake has become technically more accurate and regular |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OUTPUT INDICATORS | Number of awareness campaigns on sustainable use of resources and a cleaner environment |
| Number of investment/action plans on protecting biodiversity and soil as well as promoting ecosystem services and green infrastructures (to be disaggregated) |
| Number of investment/action plans on protecting biodiversity and soil |
| Number of investment/action plans on promoting ecosystem services |
| Number of investment/action plans on promoting green infrastructures |
| Number of pollution hot spots identified |
| Number of sensitive eco-systems addressed by actions designed to protect them |
| Number of site cleaning actions implemented |
| Number of improved waste management systems and value chains within the area |
| Number of publicity events organized for promotion of the action and/or investment/action plans and activities carried out |
| Number of action plans on sustainable use of natural resources and/or environment in general, prepared |

**Programme specific objective 3 - Employability and social inclusion is fostered**

| IMPACT INDICATORS | Number of direct beneficiaries involved (disaggregated by gender and age) |
| --- | --- |
| Percentage of population (disaggregated by gender and age) in the programme area having direct or indirect benefits as a result of the operation undertaken |
| Percentage of unemployed individuals benefiting from the programme activities have found employment or have established a business initiative (business) |
| Number of business still active after two years of their establishment |
| Percentage of unemployed who went through an internship or mentoring hired by the host enterprises |
| Number of enterprises, trades, crafts and institutions accepting a continuing internship programme |
| Percentage of new SMEs established in the cross border areas owned by young people and members of marginalised groups (disaggregated by gender and vulnerable group) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OUTCOME INDICATORS | Number of private and/or public sector operators developing possibilities and conditions for practical training of unemployed (to be disaggregated by type of operator and their beneficiary - gender and type of vulnerable group, if applicable) |
| Number of new career counselling services offered |
| Number of new/improved products, services, complementary courses (e.g. e-learning), industrial and commercial processes implemented (to be disaggregated) |
| Number of new/improved products implemented |
| Number of new/improved services implemented |
| Number of new/improved complementary courses (e.g. e-learning) implemented |
| Number of new/improved industrial and commercial processes implemented |
| Increased satisfaction of trainees with the new/improved complementary courses |
| Increased satisfaction of users/clients with the new/improved services |
| Number of new business established as a result of the call |
| Number of training courses developed and/or certified for continuity meeting the demands of the labour market |
| Number of participants in common education and training schemes to combat unemployment (to be disaggregated by gender and type of vulnerable group) |
| Number of companies in which operations, products and/or processes were improved through joint initiatives |
| Number of participants with increased employability and employment competences, of which young, women, rural population, disabled persons, long-term unemployed |
| Number of new programmes for increasing employability (especially of vulnerable groups) implemented |
| Number of enterprises involved in cooperation with education institutions for creating adequate training curricula |
| Number of participants managing to find employment thanks to new skills and competences acquired |
| Number of people employed as a consequence of development of new programmes and services |
| No of agreements established for integration of cross-border labour markets |
| Percentage of increase in the number of people employed as a result of work of labour promotion institutions (to be disaggregated by gender) |
| Percentage of the unemployed people (disaggregated by gender and age) going through CBC initiatives manage to get a job |
| Percentage of people trained in rural areas manage to find employment and decide not to move to the cities (to be disaggregated by gender) |
| Number of new jobs created as a result of promoting social inclusion through employment |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OUTPUT INDICATORS | Number of cross-border partnerships between labour promotion institutions formalized |
| Number of projects promoting social inclusion through employment supported |
| Number of new business initiatives promoting labour mobility across the border |
| Number of young people (disaggregated by gender) trained through new life-long learning services |
| Number of people trained for establishing their own businesses in the field of agriculture and rural tourism |
| Number of professionals from labour promotion institutions participate in capacity building activities |
| Number of new VET and adult learning programmes for increasing employability developed and implemented |

The contracting authority will discuss with the would-be beneficiaries the **indicators** included in their application form and eventually agree upon their revision prior to the contract signature. This is meant to improve the quality of the project indicators to capture the outcomes at the level of overall objective, specific objective(s) and results.

Applicants are advised that according to the provisions of the Article 4.3 of the special conditions of the grant contract they will quarterly have to report on the achievement of indicators to the JTS of the programme. These reports will be submitted at regular intervals on 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December every year and then upon the submission of the final report. The JTS of the programme will provide the grant beneficiaries with the Excel table they will use for this purpose.

**Baseline data surveys:** All applicants will have to devote some time and resources while preparing their application to collect statistics from relevant bodies or conduct surveys by their own in order to determine the baseline data of their indicators. Expenses such as these, related to the preparation of the application, are ineligible. However, during the period of implementation of the action, the expertise costs associated to the launch of surveys (particularly recommendable for qualitative indicators) and the collection and analysis of statistics to refine or amend the baseline data of the operation indicators may be eligible. The contracting authority strongly recommends that the applicants envisage an amount in the budget for this purpose.

Location**:**

Actions or operations must have as final beneficiaries the population of the programme area. They must take place in one or more of the following territorial units:

1. For Montenegro:
   * Andrijevica;
   * Berane;
   * Plav;
   * Gusinje**;**
   * Petnjica;
   * Rožaje;
   * Podgorica;
   * Cetinje;
   * Danilovgrad;
   * Budva;
   * Bar and
   * Ulcinj.
2. For Albania (division in accordance with the provisions of the Law 115/2014 *“On the Administrative and Territorial Division of Local Government Units in the Republic of Albania”*):
   * Region of Shkodra including the following municipalities: Malesi e Madhe, Shkoder, Vau i Dejes, Puke, Fushe Arres;
   * Region of Lezha including the following municipalities: Lezha, Miredite, Kurbin and
   * Municipality of Tropoja.

Types of action

Actions or operations selected under this cross-border cooperation programme shall deliver clear cross-border impacts and benefits, that is, they must:

* take place in the specific programme area of Montenegro and/or Albania;
* have cross-border impacts and benefits in parts of the programme area of Montenegro and Albania;
* foresee cooperation of the cross-border applicant and co-applicant(s) in both:
  + joint development: applicant and co-applicant(s) cooperate in designing the action, filling in a joint application form and drawing up their respective budget;
  + joint implementation: grant beneficiaries coordinate, in the frame of the operation, their activities across the border, and carry out most of the project activities together and not as independent, unrelated, mechanically reproduced and country-bound initiatives;
* foresee cooperation of the cross-border applicant and co-applicant(s) in either:
  + joint staffing: staff on both sides of the border act as one project team (e.g. some staffers carry out their duties for all entities in the partnership: procurement, financial management, overall coordination, training planning, etc.); or
  + joint financing: activities are financed by the applicant’s and co-applicant(s)’s own budget;
  + or both joint staffing and financing.

Briefly, following the joint development of an operation by at least two cross-border partners, **full cross-border cooperation would mean the joint implementation and financing of activities by the partners resulting in the intensification of neighborly relations, sustainable partnerships for socio-economic development and/or the removal of obstacles to this development.**

The following types of action are ineligible:

* actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
* actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses or research;
* actions aimed at the upgrading of infrastructure and equipment in privately owned facilities;
* preparatory studies or preparation of preliminary design for works to be carried out within the project;
* actions without a real cross-border impact;
* actions linked to political parties;
* actions including commercial and profit-making activities[[7]](#footnote-8);
* actions confined to charitable donations;
* actions covered and financed by other EU funded programmes.

Types of activity

Indicative types of activities which may be financed under this call for proposals are given below. The following list is not exhaustive and appropriate innovative activities that are not mentioned below may also be considered for financing when they can clearly contribute to the achievement of the call’s specific objectives and results. By way of illustration applications could contain a range of the following activities in relation to the programme’s results targeted in the call:

* **Result 2.1- Awareness of the sustainable use of environmental resources in lake and alpine areas is advanced**

List of indicative types of activities:

* Actions designed to deal jointly with environment protection and promotion in the programme area,
* Support to integrated protection and management of sensitive ecosystems giving priority to protected areas, giving priority to the protection of programme area;
* Actions designed to encourage environmentally-friendly economic activities in the programme area;
* Actions designed to prevent and manage natural disasters and man-made environmental hazards affecting the programme area;
* Support to awareness raising of the population about the importance, protection and promotion of the environmental resources of the programme area.
* **Result 3.1- Access to the labour market improved, especially for vulnerable groups**

List of indicative types of activities:

* Support cooperation among and between (vocational) education institutions and the private sector to improve the matching of training curricula for vulnerable groups with the labour market demand, including e-learning programmes and the use of ICT;
* Supporting initiatives and campaigns for self-employment, especially in the rural areas, including support to start up business for vulnerable groups;
* Support strengthening capacities of labour promotion institutions, sharing of experiences and best models to increase employability (especially of vulnerable groups) within and across the borders;
* Actions aiming at creation of job opportunities and skills for disadvantaged groups of the society;
* Research work to promote employment, labour mobility and social inclusion;
* Encourage local government – CSO partnership on social inclusion (local actions plans on disadvantaged groups, increase capacities of local government to manage social programmes and provide for the sustainability of actions);
* Organise youth exchange programmes, for example through school exchange programmes or other NGO initiatives.

Financial support to third parties[[8]](#footnote-9)**:**

Applicants must not propose financial support to third parties. In other words, sub-granting is not allowed under this call for proposals.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. As far as possible, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must incorporate information and communication activities designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

Applicants must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EUfinancing (see the 2018 Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions: <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/communication-and-visibility-manual-eu-external-actions_en>).

Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

The lead applicant **may** **not** submit more than 2 applications under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant **may not** be awarded more than 1 grant under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant **may** be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in another application at the same time.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity **may not** be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in more than 3 applications under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity **may not** be awarded more than 2 grants under this call for proposals.

* + 1. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for ‘eligible costs’.

The reimbursement of eligible costs may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:

* financing not linked to costs of the relevant operations based on:

1. either the fulfilment of conditions set out in sector specific legislation or Commission Decisions; or
2. the achievement of results measured by reference to the previously set milestones or through performance indicators;

* actual costs incurred by the beneficiaries and affiliated entity(ies)
* one or more simplified cost options.

Simplified cost options may take the form of:

* **unit costs:** covering all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by reference to an amount per unit.
* **lump sums:** covering in global terms all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance.
* **flat-rate financing:** covering specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by applying a percentage fixed ex ante.

Simplified costs options (SCOs) are divided in two categories:

1. "output or result based SCOs": this category includes costs linked to outputs, results, activities, deliverables in the framework of a specific project (for example the determination of a lump sum for the organization of a conference, or for the realisation of a determined output/activity). Where possible and appropriate, lump sums, unit costs or flat rates shall be determined in such a way to allow their payment upon achievement of concrete outputs and/or results. This type of SCO can be proposed by the Beneficiary (no threshold is applicable) at proposal's stage. In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.
2. "Other/recurrent SCOs". This second category entails simplified cost options embedded in the accounting practices of the beneficiary, for which an ex-ante assessment is deemed necessary, considering the need of a consistent application of the conditions required. Examples are: an additional percentage on actual salaries to cover remuneration-related costs or the use of an allocation method to apportion costs of a project office foreseen in the Description of the Action. In order the use of systemic/recurrent SCOs, the beneficiary's accounting practices need to have been positively assessed by an audit firm based on standard ToRs provided by the Commission. To obtain reimbursement of this category of SCOs, the beneficiary shall make reference to the previously obtained ex-ante assessment in the budget justification sheet (annex e3c).

The amounts or rates have to be based on estimates using objective data such as statistical data or any other objective means or with reference to certified or auditable historical data of the applicants or the affiliated entity(-ies). Determining SCO is possible also through ‘expert judgement’ provided by internally available experts or procured in accordance with the applicable rules. Experts must be either commissioned auditors or chartered accountants, or staff of the Commission but cannot be staff of the beneficiary. The methods used to determine the amounts or rates of unit costs, lump sums or flat-rates must comply with the criteria established in Annex K, and especially ensure that the costs correspond fairly to the actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies), are in line with their accounting practices, no profit is made and the costs are not already covered by other sources of funding (no double funding). Refer to Annex K for the details of the procedure to be followed depending on the type and amount of the costs to be declared as SCO.

Applicants proposing this form of reimbursement, must clearly indicate in worksheet no.1 of Annex B, each heading/item of eligible costs concerned by this type of financing, i.e. add the reference in capital letters to ‘UNIT COST’ (per month/flight etc.), ‘LUMPSUM’, ‘FLAT RATE’ in the Unit column (see example in Annex K).

Additionally in Annex B, in the second column of worksheet no.2, ‘Justification of the estimated costs’ per each of the corresponding budget item or heading applicants must:

* describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of unit costs, lump sums and/or flat-rates, to which costs they refer, etc for output or result based SCO.
* clearly explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount for output or result based SCO[[9]](#footnote-10)
* make reference to the previously obtained ex-ante assessment for other/recurrent SCOs.

In case of output or result based SCOs the evaluation committee and the contracting authority decide whether to accept the proposed amounts or rates on the basis of the provisional budget submitted by the applicants, by analysing factual data of grants carried out by the applicants or of similar actions. In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

No threshold is set ex-ante for the total amount of financing that can be authorised by the contracting authority on the basis of simplified cost options. Other/recurrent SCOs can be declared only if previously successfully ex-ante assessed.

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant contract do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the contracting authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant or the percentage of EU co-financing as a result of these corrections.

It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

|  |
| --- |
| The grant may take the form of a single lump-sum covering the entire eligible costs of an action or a work programme.  Single lump sums may be determined on the basis of the estimated budget, which should comply with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Compliance with these principles shall be verified ex ante at the time of evaluation of the grant application.  When authorising single lump sums the authorising officer responsible shall comply with the conditions applicable to output or result based SCOs.  When using this form of financing, the description of the action shall include detailed information on the essential conditions triggering the payment, including, where applicable, the achievement of outputs and/or results. |

The responsible authorising officer may consider that the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary are compliant with the conditions applicable to simplified cost options, if they are accepted by national authorities under comparable funding schemes. In this case the grant beneficiary shall demonstrate that the national authority accepted the cost accounting practices and will have to specify in which context this acceptance is given.

The evaluation committee and the contracting authority will assess if the funding scheme is comparable and in case of positive outcome will consider these practices as if they were ex-ante assessed by an external auditor.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines).

**Salary costs of the personnel of national, regional or local administrations, as well as those of other publicly owned or controlled institutions or enterprises,** may be eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the action or operation were not undertaken.

**This personnel shall not receive for the engagement in the project activities any other remuneration than their standard, regular salaries in their respective institutions.**

**The total sum of the salaries of this personnel shall not exceed the amount of co-financing provided by the applicant, co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies).**

Prior to the signature of a grant contract, the contracting authority may require from the relevant beneficiaries the appointment of these staffers by their authorised representative in writing (indicating their names, project function and gross salaries).

Please note that this does not apply to professional staff recruited by the national, regional or local administrations, as well as other publicly owned or controlled institutions or enterprises, for the sole purpose of managing this project resulting from the grant award.

Applicants are reminded that in contracts where the EU grant exceeds € 100 000 they must include in the budget the cost of **an audit or expenditure verification** that will be carried out by an independent auditor before submitting the final financial report of the action. All grant contracts requiring such an audit or expenditure verification will have the Annex G.VII referred to in the list of annexes.

**Visibility costs:** as the grant beneficiaries will have to respect the programme requirements on visibility (please see Section 2.1.4 above), and as visibility can be instrumental for the sustainability of an action, the contracting authority strongly recommends that as a general rule applicants envisage an **amount of at least 1 %** of the total eligible costs for **visibility purposes.**

Contingency reserve

The budget may include a contingency reserve not exceeding 5 % of the estimated direct eligible costs. It can only be used with the **prior written authorisation** of the contracting authority.

Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed 7 %of the estimated total eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the special conditions of the grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

If any of the applicants or affiliated entity(ies) is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU, it must not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the action.

Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to beneficiaries or affiliated entities free of charge by a third party. As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for beneficiaries or affiliated entities, they are normally not eligible costs.

As an exception, contributions in kind may include personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or work programme (which are eligible costs).

Contributions in kind from third parties in the form of volunteers' work, valued on the basis of unit costs defined and authorised by the contracting authority, shall be presented in the estimated budget, separately from the other eligible costs (i.e. as an accepted costs together with other contributions in kind).

Volunteers' work may comprise up to 50 % of the co-financing. For the purposes of calculating this percentage, contributions in kind and other co-financing shall be based on estimates provided by the applicant.

When the estimated costs include volunteers' work, the grant shall not exceed the estimated eligible costs other than the costs for volunteers' work.

Contributions in kind must not be treated as co-financing.

However, if the description of the action as proposed includes contributions in kind, the contributions have to be made.

Ineligible costs

According to the provisions of Article 43(2) of Commission implementing regulation (EU) No 447/2014 of 2 May 2014 and those of Article 6 of the General Conditions of the Financing Agreements for the yearly allocations of the programme, the following expenditures **are not eligible[[10]](#footnote-11)**for a contribution from IPA II:

1. value added tax (VAT) except when it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;
2. the decommissioning and the construction of nuclear power stations;
3. investment to achieve the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from activities falling under Annex I to Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and Council of 13 October 2003;
4. the manufacturing, processing and marketing of tobacco and tobacco products;
5. undertakings in difficulties as defined under Union State aid rules;
6. investment in airport infrastructure unless related to environmental protection or accompanied by investment necessary to mitigate or reduce its negative environmental impact;
7. debts and debt service charges (interest on debt);
8. provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
9. cost declared by the beneficiaries and financed by another action or work programme receiving a Union grant;
10. currency exchange losses;
11. credits to third parties;
12. fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation;
13. the purchase of land and existing buildings. However, by way of derogation, the purchase of land not built on and land built on in the amount up of to 10 % of the total eligible expenditure for the operation concerned shall be eligible for funding. For derelict sites and for those formerly in industrial use which comprise buildings, this limit shall be increased to 15 %. In exceptional and duly justified cases, this limit may be raised above the respective preceding percentages for operations concerning environmental conservation.

In addition, the following costs **are not eligible either**:

1. consultant fees between the beneficiaries for services or work carried out within the project;
2. remuneration of any kind for staff of any of the beneficiaries being hired as external experts or freelance consultants;
3. taxes, customs and import duties and levies and/or charges having equivalent effect[[11]](#footnote-12).

**Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct**

1. Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

1. Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

**Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and sexual abuse:**

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

1. Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The European Commission reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, ‘corrupt practices’ are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

1. Unusual commercial expenses

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

1. Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

* 1. How to apply and the procedures to follow

Information in PADOR will not be drawn upon in the present call.

* + 1. Application forms

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions on the concept note and the full applications in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A).

Applicants must apply in English which is the language of this Call for Proposals

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the instructions on the concept note or any major inconsistency in the application e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that only the grant application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

**With the application the lead applicant also has to submit completed organisation data forms (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each (if any) co-applicants and each (if any) affiliated entities.**

No additional annexes should be sent.

* + 1. Where and how to send applications

Applications must be submitted in one original and 3 copies in A4 size, each bound. The complete application form (Part A: concept note and Part B: full application form), budget and logical framework must also be supplied in electronic format (CD-ROM) in a separate and single file (i.e. the application must not be split into several different files). The electronic file must contain **exactly the same** application as the paper version enclosed.

The checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form) and the declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 of Part B of the grant application form) must be stapled separately and enclosed in the envelope.

Where a lead applicant sends several different applications (if allowed to do so by the guidelines of the call), each one has to be sent separately.

The outer envelope must bear the **reference number and the title of the call for proposals**, together with the title and number of the lot/specific objective, the full name and address of the lead applicant, and the words ‘Not to be opened before the opening session’ and ‘(„Ne otvarati prije sastanka za otvaranje prijedloga projekata“).

Applications must be submitted 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 below:

Postal address

Ministry of Finance

Directorate for Finance and Contracting of the EU Assistance Funds

Stanka Dragojevića 2,

81000 Podgorica, Montenegro

Address for hand delivery

Ministry of Finance

Directorate for Finance and Contracting of the EU Assistance Funds

Stanka Dragojevića 2, room 5

81000 Podgorica, Montenegro

Please note that the opening hours of the Contracting Authority are 07:00h-15:00h.

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

**Lead applicants must verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Section7 of Part B of the grant application form).Incomplete applications may be rejected.**

* + 1. Deadline for submission of applications

The applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that there are two different systems for sending applications/full proposals: one is by post or private courier service, the other is by hand delivery.

In the first case, the application/full proposal must be sent before the date for submission, as evidenced by the postmark or deposit slip, but in the second case it is the acknowledgment of receipt given at the time of the delivery of the application/full proposal which will serve as proof.

The deadline for the submission of applications is 27th May 2019, as evidenced by the date of dispatch, the postmark or the date of the deposit slip. In the case of hand-deliveries, the deadline for receipt is 27th May 2019 at 14:30h, as evidenced by the signed and dated receipt. Any application submitted after the deadline will automatically be rejected.

The contracting authority may, for reasons of administrative efficiency, reject any application submitted on time to the postal service but received, for any reason beyond the contracting authority's control, after the effective date of approval of the first evaluation step (i.e. concept note), if accepting applications that were submitted on time but arrived late would considerably delay the award procedure or jeopardise decisions already taken and notified. (see indicative calendar under Section 2.5.2).

* + 1. Further information about applications

Notice on information session on this Call for Proposals will be published after publishing call for proposals on:

* the EuropeAid website:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome>

* the website of the Contracting Authority:

the Ministry of Finance of Montenegro - Directorate for Finance and Contracting of the EU Assistance Funds (<http://www.cfcu,gov.me/en/sections/CFCU_Tenders>).

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of applications to the below address, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: [cfpmne.al@mif.gov.me](mailto:cfpmne.al@mif.gov.me)

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the submission of applications.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published on the website of DG International Cooperation and Development and the website of the Contracting Authority.

The link to the website of the Ministry of Finance of Montenegro - Directorate for Finance and Contracting of the EU Assistance Funds will be given at the following websites:

* the Government of Montenegro, Office for European Integration(<http://http://www.kei.gov.me>);
* the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania (<http://www.http://punetejashtme.gov.al>) and
* the Programme Montenegro-Albania 2014-2020 (<https://www.cbc-mne-alb.org>), as the need arises.

It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

* 1. Evaluation and selection of applications

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application (concept note and full application) reveals at any time that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.1 above, the application will be rejected on this sole basis without undertaking further evaluation steps.

1. **STEP 1: OPENING&ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION**

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

* + - If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
* If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Section7 of Part B of the grant application form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application maybe rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

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

The concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note, which can be found in Part A of the grant application form.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Scores** | |
| **1. Relevance of the action** | Sub-score | **20** |
| 1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)? \* | 5 |  |
| 1.2 How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant 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 and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? | 5 |  |
| 1.4 Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements such as innovation and best practices *and above all, cross-border dimension*: joint **development**, joint **implementation**, joint **staffing** and/or joint **financing**. (Please, see section 2.1.4 of these GfA) | 5 |  |
| **2. Design of the action** | Sub-score | **30** |
| 2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the action?  Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? | 5x2\*\* |  |
| 2.2 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? | 5 |  |
| 2.3 Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)? | 5 |  |
| 2.4 Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic? | 5 |  |
| 2.5 To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth, combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)? | 5 |  |
| **TOTAL SCORE** | | **50** |

\* Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the concept note clearly demonstrates how it specifically addresses one of the specific objectives of the call as indicated in Section 1.2 (Objectives of the programme) of these guidelines.

\*\*This score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

Once all concept notes have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

Firstly, only the concept notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the number of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking per specific objective, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to 200% of the available budget for this call for proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each specific objective, where relevant.

After the evaluation of concept notes, the contracting authority will send letters to all lead applicants, indicating whether their application was submitted by the deadline, informing them of the reference number they have been allocated, whether the concept note was evaluated and the results of that evaluation. The evaluation committee will then proceed with the lead applicants whose proposals have been pre-selected.

1. **STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION**

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

* If the full application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (Section 7 of Part B of the grant application form). This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The full applications that pass this check will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

**The selection criteria** help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s operational capacity and the lead applicant's financial capacity and are used to verify that they:

* have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding (this only applies to lead applicants);
* have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This applies to applicants and any affiliated entity(ies).

**The award criteria** help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

*Scoring:*

The evaluation grid is divided into sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

**Evaluation grid**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Maximum Score** |
| **1. Financial and operational capacity** | **20** |
| 1.1 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house experience of project management? | 5 |
| 1.2 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house technical expertise? (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed) | 5 |
| 1.3 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house management capacity? (Including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)? | 5 |
| 1.4 Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance? | 5 |
| **2. Relevance** | **20** |
| *Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation* |  |
| **3. Design of the action** | **15** |
| 3.1 How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)? | 5 |
| 3.2 Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification? If not, is a baseline study foreseen (and is the study budgeted appropriately in the proposal)? | 5 |
| 3.3 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? | 5 |
| **4. Implementation approach** | **15** |
| 4.1 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic? | 5 |
| 4.2 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 |
| 4.3 Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory? | 5 |
| **5. Sustainability of the action** | **15** |
| 5.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups? | 5 |
| 5.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing? | 5 |
| 5.3 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?)*  - At policy level (where applicable) *(what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods)*  - Environmentally (if applicable) *(will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?)* | 5 |
| **6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action** | **15** |
| 6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? | / 5 |
| 6.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory? | / 10 |
| **Maximum total score** | **100** |

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the lead applicant applies without co-applicants or affiliated entities the score for point 3.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of co-applicants or affiliated entities is mandatory according to these guidelines for applicants.

*Provisional selection*

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score per specific objective of the call and within the limits of the funds available per objective. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list. Please see Section 1.3 above for more details.

1. **STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS ANDAFFILIATED ENTITY(IES)**

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section2.4). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

* The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 of Part B of the grant application form) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
* The eligibility of applicants and the affiliated entity(ies) will be verified according to the criteria set out in Sections 2.1.1 and2.1.2.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals per specific objective of the call. Please see the provisions of Section 1.3 above for more details.

* 1. Submission of supporting documents for provisionally selected applications

A lead applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents in order to allow the contracting authority to verify the eligibility of the lead applicant, of the co-applicant(s) and (if any) of their affiliated entity(ies)[[12]](#footnote-13):

The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity[[13]](#footnote-14). This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.

For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants above EUR 100 000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available. In all other cases, the applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by a beneficiary to an authorising officer responsible in any one financial year.

The external audit report is not required from (if any) the co-applicant(s)) or affiliated entities.

This obligation does not apply to public bodies and international organisations provided that the international organisation in question offers the guarantees provided for in the applicable Financial Regulation, as described in Chapter 6 of the practical guide.

A copy of the lead applicant’s latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed)[[14]](#footnote-15). A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) nor from (if any) affiliated entity(ies).

Legal entity sheet (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and by each co-applicant), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the contracting authority, instead of the legal entity sheet and supporting documents,the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.

A financial identification form of the lead applicant (not from co-applicants) conforming to the model attached as Annex E of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the lead applicant is established. If the lead applicant has already submitted a financial identification form in the past for a contract where the European Commission was in charge of the payments and intends to use the same bank account, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead.

**Please bear in mind when an operation contains the execution of works, the following supporting documents, submitted along with the full application form, will be necessary**:

1. Proof of ownership or long term lease (at least for 10 years after the signature of the contract) of the land/assets where the works are to be executed;
2. Approved/certified detailed work design or otherwise a statement by the relevant national institution(s) confirming that the national legislation(s) do/does not require the design’s approval for this type of works;
3. A positive decision on environmental impact assessment or otherwise a statement from the relevant public authority(ies) that the latter assessment(s) are/is not needed for the specific project activities;
4. All necessary legal authorisations, where applicable (e.g.: location and construction permits);
5. An indicative priced bill of quantities issued not earlier than 2 years prior to the deadline for submission of full applications – calculated in euro.

Documents must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union or in the official languages of the country where the action will be implemented, a translation into English language of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, must be attached for the purpose of analysing the application.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than English, it is **strongly** recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, into English.

If the abovementioned supporting documents (with the exception of those submitted for operations containing the execution of works[[15]](#footnote-16)) are not provided before the deadline indicated in the request for supporting documents sent to the lead applicant by the contracting authority, the application may be rejected.

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

NB: In the eventuality that the contracting authority is not satisfied with the strength, solidity, and guarantee offered by the structural link between one of the applicants and its affiliated entity, it can require the submission of the missing documents allowing for its conversion into co-applicant. If all the missing documents for co-applicants are submitted, and provided all necessary eligibility criteria are fulfilled, the above mentioned entity becomes a co-applicant for all purposes. The lead applicant has to submit the application form revised accordingly.

* 1. Notification of the contracting authority’s decision
     1. Content of the decision

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the contracting authority’s decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See further Section 2.12 of the practical guide.

* + 1. Indicative timetable

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **DATE** | **TIME** |
| **1. Information meeting (if any)** | Date and time to be announced within 15 days of the launch of this Call for Proposals (see 2.2.4 above) | |
| **2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority** | 6th May 2019 | 15:00h |
| **3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority** | 16th May 2019 | - |
| **4. Deadline for submission of applications** | 27th May 2019 | 14:30h |
| **5. Information to lead applicants on opening, administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)** | 5th August 2019 | - |
| **6. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)** | 26th September 2019 | - |
| **7. Notification of award after eligibility check (Step 3)** | 26th September 2019 |  |
| **8. Contract signature** | 11th December 2019 | - |

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site of DG International Cooperation and Development: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome> and the websites of the programme <https://www.cbc-mne-alb.org> and the contracting authority [www.cfcu.gov.me](http://www.cfcu.gov.me), the website of the Montenegrin Operating Structure: [www.kei.gov.me](http://www.kei.gov.me) and the website of the Albanian Operating Structure: [www.punetejashtme.gov.al](http://www.punetejashtme.gov.al) .

* 1. Conditions for implementation after the contracting authority’s decision to award a grant

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract. Where the coordinator is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed, it will sign a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. In this case references to provisions of the standard grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the grant contract shall be understood as references to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement.

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the beneficiary(ies)and its affiliated entity(ies) (if any)to award procurement contracts, those contracts must be awarded in accordance with Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

In this context, a distinction should be made between awarding implementation contracts and subcontracting parts of the action described in the proposal, i.e. the description of the action annexed to the grant contract, such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

Awarding implementation contracts: implementation contracts relate to the acquisition by beneficiaries of routine services and/or necessary goods and equipment as part of their project management; they do not cover any outsourcing of tasks forming part of the action that are described in the proposal, i.e. in the description of the action annexed to the grant contract.

Subcontracting: Subcontracting is the implementation, by a third party with which one or more beneficiaries have concluded a procurement contract, of specific tasks forming part of the action as described in annex to the grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

1. LIST OF annexes

**Documents to be completed**

Annex A: Grant application form (Word format)

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical framework (Excel format)

Annex D: Legal entity sheet

Annex E: Financial identification form

Annex F: Organisation data form

Annex G: Standard grant contract

- Annex II: general conditions

- Annex IV: contract award rules

- Annex V: standard request for payment

- Annex VI: model narrative and financial report

-Annex VII: model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action

-Annex VIII: model financial guarantee

-Annex IX: standard template for transfer of ownership of assets

Annex H: Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-procurement-contracts/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag/diems_en>

Annex J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.

Annex K: Guidelines for simplified cost options.

**Useful links:**

**Project Cycle Management Guidelines**

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-guidelines-vol-1\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-guidelines-vol-1_en)

**The implementation of grant contracts**

**A Users' Guide**

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/companion/document.do?nodeNumber=19&locale=en>

**Financial Toolkit**

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/procedures-beneficiary-countries-and-partners/financial-management-toolkit_en>

Please note: The toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

\* \* \*

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Note that a lead applicant (i.e. a ccoordinator) whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission and who is awarded a grant will not sign the standard grant contract published with these guidelines but a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. All references in these guidelines and other documents related to this call to the standard grant contract shall in this case be understood as referring to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement template. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. To be determined on the basis of the organisation’s statutes, which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ has been concluded. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. According to provisions of Article 54(1) Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 447/2014 “the beneficiaries shall be established in an IPA II beneficiary”. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. In line with the cross-border nature of the programme, please note that the nationality of the lead applicant (either Montenegro or Albania) automatically determines the nationality of at least one co-applicant (Albania if the lead applicant is effectively established in Montenegro or Montenegro if the lead applicant is effectively established in Albania). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The updated lists of sanctions are available at [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu).

   Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. In case the project generates revenue, it shall be used to finance the operation, together with the other sources of funding. Revenue of an operation means cash in-flows directly paid by users for the goods and services provided by the operation, such as charges borne directly by users for the use of infrastructure, sale or rent of land or buildings, or payment for services incurred during the period of implementation of the operation. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Examples:- for staff costs: number of hours or days of work \* hourly or daily rate pre-set according to the category of personnel concerned;- for travel expenses: distance in km \* pre-set cost of transport per km; number of days \* daily allowance pre-set according to the country;- for specific costs arising from the organization of an event: number of participants at the event \* pre-set total cost per participant etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Depending on the amendments of the relevant regulations, the contracting authority could extent the list of ineligible costs. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Please see Article 28(1) of the IPA II framework agreement [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. No supporting document will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR60,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Where the lead applicant and/or a co-applicant(s) and or an affiliated entity(ies)is a public body created by a law, a copy of the said law must be provided. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received a scholarship or that are in most need in receipt of direct support, nor to public bodies and to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to Section 2.4.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Where appropriate, submitted together with the full application form. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)