

INTERREG IPA SOUTH ADRIATIC PROGRAMME 2021-2027

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Call for the selection of 1 (one) Head of First Level Control Office, located in Tirana

Introduction:

The Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme 2021-2027 is co-funded by the European Union through the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA III). The Programme is managed by Puglia Region – Department for Economic Development, Innovation, Education, Training and Employment. Eligible areas under the Programme are Puglia and Molise regions of Italy, as well as Albania and Montenegro (the whole territory). The Programme's objective is to promote economic growth and intensify cooperation in the low Adriatic area, by implementing joint actions between national and regional institutional and not-for-profit actors and by fostering smart, inclusive and sustainable development.

The Managing Authority of the Programme is Puglia Region and the Joint Secretariat HQ is located in Bari. In Albania, the National Authority in charge for the coordination of the Programme is the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC), while a National Info Point (NIP) Office is established in Tirana. The National Authority is responsible for the functioning of the management and control system in Albania, in particular that the compliance with the applicable EU and national rules is assured for all expenditures of Albanian beneficiaries¹.

In Albania, a centralized first level control system is in place. The First Level Control (FLC) Office in Albania is established by the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC). The staff of the FLC Office is composed of 4 (four) persons, 1 (one) Head and 3 (three) First Level Controllers. The FLC office shall ensure that the expenditure, declared by the beneficiaries located in Albanian eligible area, can be validated within a period of three months from the date of its submission by the beneficiary. Verifications are carried out in order to verify the delivery of the co-financed products and services, the reality of expenditure claimed in case of reimbursement of costs actually incurred and the compliance with the terms of the relevant Commission Decision approving the Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme and applicable Union law and national law relating to its application.

All applications for reimbursement by Beneficiaries shall be subject to administrative verifications based on an examination of the claim and relevant supporting documentation such as invoices, delivery notes, bank statements, progress reports and timesheets. The FLC office shall carry out the administrative control of expenditure declarations before submitting the first level Expenditure Certified Declaration (including the check-list, report and certificate) through the Electronic Monitoring System/Jems to Managing Authority. Following the administrative control of expenditure declarations carried out on all expenditure, the Albanian FLC office is responsible for carrying out on-the-spot verifications of expenditure at the premises of the beneficiaries as well as in any other place where the project is being implemented in line with

¹ In accordance with paragraphs 3 to 9 of Article 46 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.

the sampling methodology established by the Programme and on request of the National Authority, according to the sample drawn by the Managing Authority.

The Head of the First Level Control Office is responsible for ensuring the validity and regularity of the activities implemented and expenditures declared by Albanian beneficiaries in the framework of the operations funded by the Interreg IPA South Adriatic 2021-2027, through the supervision of the work of the first level controllers. He/she reports directly to the National Authority on the functioning of the centralised FLC system.

The Head of FLCO shall perform the following main tasks:

- Verifies the legality and regularity of activities and of the expenditure declared by each of the Albanian beneficiaries implementing the operations carried out in the Albanian territory as well as their compliance with EU and National rules, based on the Framework Agreement, the applicable Programme documents, the Subsidy Contract, the Partnership Agreement and the Application Form, through:
- Verification of the certificates prepared and issued by the first level controllers under his/her supervision, in accordance with the documents of all projects for which the beneficiaries have prepared/submitted progress reports, and in accordance with the following principles:
 - **Principles of reality and economy** according to which it is necessary to verify that the expenditure is actually incurred, it is directly linked to the co-financed operation and the objectives pursued are achieved through the activities undertaken in due time, in appropriate quality and at the best price.
 - **Principle of regularity² and legality** according to which it is necessary to verify that the expenditure complies with the EU and National laws and the contract including the verification of financial reports, the compliance of expenses required to be reimbursed with the budget articles of the application form; verification of financial documents (legality of expenses and payments and their compliance with community and domestic regulations); verification of compliance of the reported activities with national and community rules; verification of compliance of public procurement procedures with applicable rules; verifications of the fulfillment of requirements for the Programme publicity; application of anti-fraud measures;
 - **Principle of localisation** of the co-financed operation, according to which it is necessary to verify that the expenditure incurred is related to an operation implemented within the Programme eligible area; on-the-spot verifications at the premises of the beneficiary partners in Albania and/or location where the activities are implemented, in accordance with the sampling methodology established by the Programme;

² Namely, the extent to which transactions have been conducted in accordance with the relevant laws and contracts.

- **Principle of documented evidence** requiring that expenditure has been documented with receipts and/or invoices or accounting records of equivalent legal validity.
- Assists the Programme Structures such as: National Authority (NA), Managing Authority (MA), Joint Secretariat (JS), Joint Monitoring Committee/Monitoring Committee (JMC/MC), and Certifying Authority (CA), Audit Authority (AA) or other structures with respect to the functioning of Programme implementation within the framework of the competences of the FLC Office.
- Assists the National Authority or other Programme structures in providing training sessions for potential beneficiaries/leading partners in the Albanian territory, in compliance with the plan approved by the Programme structures.
- Provides the National Authority with reports, statistics and information on the work of the FLC Office and the implementation of the Programme when requested.
- Cooperates with Audit Authority, Group of Auditors and other Control and Audit entities, by the national or from the European Union, in their control and audit activities and provides them with all required documents.
- Supervises the work of the First Level Controllers working in the FLC Office; plans and updates regularly the work load and the annual plan for on-the-spot verifications in accordance with the sampling methodology established by the Programme, in line with approval of projects in Programme calls.
- Supervises the implementation of quality assurance procedures of the Programme and reports to the Programme authorities on this.
- Ensures that all work processes and procedures are carried out in line with established Programme rules and SASPAC work practices for the public administration.
- Applies confidentiality and impartiality principles, as well as strictly avoiding any conflict of interest, in particular being in no way entitled to accept any other assignments by beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries of the Programme, which are incompatible with the current position.

Required Qualifications

1. University Degree (at least 4 years of studies in finance, accounting, economics, law or other relevant fields);
2. At least 5 years of working experience in financial management and/or control and audit of projects/programmes, preferably financed by EU Funds;
3. Knowledge of relevant EU regulations, Programme rules and Albanian National laws and regulations in place;
4. Good knowledge of public procurement procedures (National and PRAG rules);
5. Familiar with Programme and project level monitoring procedures and systems.
6. Advanced level of English language, both spoken and written (at least B2); able to prepare documents in standard English and communicate effectively with relevant authorities, when needed;

7. A clean criminal record, as well as no disciplinary record, connected to failures in fulfilling accountancy or financial management tasks.
8. Very good computer literacy including Excel, word processing, and use of data bases.

Additional elements/qualifications to be considered as an asset:

1. Post graduate studies in any field of relevance to the mentioned tasks, such as Master's degree or post-graduate qualification in accounting, finance or auditing;
2. Professional certified accountant or accomplished professional training programme in either audit (Certified Public Accountant or Statutory Auditor) or accounting (Certified Accountant);
3. Experience in management or technical support of Interreg Programmes;
4. Experience in management of public procurement procedures (National and PRAG);
5. Good knowledge of Italian (B2 or above);
6. Previous experience in leading working teams;
7. Organizational skills and effectiveness;
8. Knowledge of public finance rules and practices;
9. Proven ability to work in a multicultural environment.

Administrative Elements

1. Contesters/participants will be asked to have:
 - a. Good Knowledge of the Interreg IPA South Adriatic Programme: <https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/programme/south-adriatic-2021-27>
 - b. Good Knowledge of PRAG Rules: <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>
 - c. Good knowledge of the Albanian Labor Code: <https://qbz.gov.al/preview/c1c18a6c-5f3e-457d-b931-de505b3c7ed0>
2. Evaluation
 - a. Their qualification will be done based upon the above qualification requirements.
 - b. Contesters/participants qualified to enter the test will be evaluated based on the following norms:
 - i. Dossier: up to **15 points**.
 - ii. Written Test: up to **60 points**.
 - iii. Interview: up to **25 points**.

The final selection will be for the best of those who reach more than **70 points** in total.