INTERREG IPA SOUTH ADRIATIC
PROGRAMME 2021-2027

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Call for the selection of two (2) First Level Control Officers, 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 beneficiaries[1].

The first level controller carries out administrative verifications on expenditure submitted by beneficiaries and on-the-spot verifications of operations. He/she carries out this regulatory and mandatory verification, which covers the expenditure of partners declared during the implementation of the project.

The First Level Control Officer reports to the Head of the First Level Control Office, to the Contracting Authority and the Albanian National Authority, if necessary.

The administrative verifications should normally include:

- The correctness of the declared expenditure according to the application form;
- The correspondence of the expenditure to the approved operation;
- The correspondence of the expenditure to the eligible period;
- The Compliance with programme manuals and conditions;
- The Compliance with National and Community legislation and eligibility rules;

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

- The adequacy of supporting documents;
- The existence of an adequate audit trail.

The first level controller shall perform the following main tasks:

- Verifies the legality, regularity and reality of the activities and the expenditure declared by each of the Albanian beneficiaries/partners implementing the operations, by verifying that the co-financed products and services have been delivered and that expenditure declared by the beneficiaries/partners has been paid and that it complies with applicable law, the Cooperation Programme and the conditions for support of the operation;
- Verifies the documents of all the operations for which the beneficiaries/partners have prepared their progress report, in order to verify the eligibility of expenditure in accordance with the following principles:

  a) ***Principle of reality of expenditure,*** according to which it is necessary to verify that the expenditure has actually incurred and is linked to the co-financed operation; verification of the reporting of activities during the implementation of the project by the Albanian beneficiary/partner, based on the Subsidy Contract, Partnership Agreement and the Application Form.
  b) ***Principle of legality and regularity***[2], according to which it is necessary to verify that the expenditure complies with Community, Programme and National rules; verification of financial reports in terms of the compliance of expenditure for which reimbursement is requested with the approved budget; verification of financial documents (legality and regularity of expenditures declared and payments made); verification of the reported activities to ensure compliance with the Subsidy Contract and approved Application Form; verification of the applicable procurement rules and provisions for expenditure on works, supplies and services; and, verification of the fulfillment of the Programme requirements for visibility and communication.
  c) ***Principle of localisation of the co-financed operation***, according to which it is necessary to verify that the expenditure incurred is related to the operation and made in the eligible Programme area; on-the-spot verifications made at the head office/branch of the Albanian beneficiary/partner, as established by the Programme rules.
  d) ***Principle of documented evidence*** according to which expenditure is documented as paid with receipts, receipted invoices or accounting records of equal legal validity.

- Prepares and issue the Certificate of Validity of Expenditures - CVE, after verifying the full compliance with all applicable conditions of the progress report/s and

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

supporting documentation sent by every Albanian beneficiary partner of the Programme, within a maximum period of 3 months of the submission of the documents by the beneficiary concerned.

- Follows and implements every official document prepared by the Managing Authority and the National Authority in the framework of the Programme, on the basis of the assigned Tasks and the applicable legal framework, manuals and regulations, orders, guidelines, etc.
- Cooperates with the Joint Secretariat in all activities related to the First Level Control (FLC) of expenditure of the beneficiaries/partners during the whole duration of implementation of the awarded projects.
- Attends training and information sessions and FLC workshops organized by the Programme bodies or INTERACT, on the invitation of the Managing Authority and duly authorised by SASPAC.
- Cooperates with the Audit Authority and any other entitled national and/or EU Control and Audit entities or bodies for the purpose of audits, including the provision of relevant documents.
- Assists the Programme Bodies such as: the Managing Authority (MA), the Joint Secretariat (JS), the Monitoring Committee (MC), the Accounting Authority (AcA), the Audit Authority (AA) or other relevant structures with respect to the functioning of Programme implementation, in compliance with the provisions of the Programme's Manual.
- Assists the National Authority to prepare reports, statistics and information regarding the certification of expenditure when requested.
- Provides advisory assistance for all Albanian beneficiaries during the whole duration of the project implementation.
- Attends meetings with beneficiaries/partners as planned or when required by the National Authority, as well as activities organized in the framework of the Programme (where relevant).
- Informs periodically the Head of the First Level Control and the National Authority in relation to any issues or irregularities detected during the implementation of operations by Albanian beneficiaries.
- Assists the National Authority to offer training sessions for potential beneficiaries/leading partners in the Albanian territory, in compliance with the preliminary plan approved by SASPAC.
- Carries out any other tasks established by the National Authority in agreement with the Management Authority related to the activity of the First Level Control Office and certification of expenditure.
- Ensures timely and quality performance of the assigned Tasks which shall be carried out with due diligence at all times.

Required Qualifications

1. University Degree (University Degree or Diploma, min 4 years' study in the fields of intervention relevance).
2. At least 3 years' professional experience in management and/or control of EU/other donors, co-financed projects/programmes.
3. Proven very good knowledge of English language.
4. Very good drafting, presentation and communication skills.
5. Computer literacy (word processing, preparation of presentations, use of data bases and monitoring procedures and systems).

Additional qualifications to be considered

1. Post graduate studies in any field of relevance to the mentioned tasks;
2. Participation in other Registers, i.e. Auditor's Register etc.;
3. Good knowledge of a second EU language;
4. Excellent knowledge of European legal framework for the management and implementation of Programmes co-financed by Structural Funds;
5. Excellent knowledge in public procurement procedures;
6. Experience in management or technical support of Interreg Programmes;
7. Organizational skills and effectiveness;
8. Ability to work under pressure;
9. Ability to work in a multicultural environment;
10. Capacity to undertake initiatives and responsibilities;
11. Willingness to travel frequently.

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:

      b1. Dossier: up to 15 points.

b2. Written testing: up to 60 points.
b3. Oral testing: up to 25 points.

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