

## ANNEX I

### Methodological approach for the assessment of the project proposal and Tasks of the independent evaluators

#### First call for proposals

The first call for proposals is open to the following Programme Priority Axes and Specific Objectives, summarised below:

<b>Priority Axis 1: Innovative and Smart Region</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Specific Objective 1.1:</b> Support the development of a regional innovation system for the Adriatic-Ionian area.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority Axis 2: Sustainable region</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Specific Objective 2.1:</b> Promote the sustainable valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural assets as growth assets in the Adriatic-Ionian area;</li> <li>▪ <b>Specific Objective 2.2:</b> Enhance the capacity in transnationally tackling environmental vulnerability, fragmentation and the safeguarding of ecosystem services in the Adriatic-Ionian area.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority Axis 3: Connected region</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Specific Objective 3.1:</b> Enhance capacity for integrated transport and mobility services and multimodality in the Adriatic Ionian area.</li> </ul>

Under the terms of this call, a project proposal must focus on one Priority Axis and one programme Specific Objective only.

Beneficiaries and target groups include public authorities, agencies, international organizations, research organisations, (public) service providers, higher education institutions, education/training centres, schools, business support organisations, interest groups including NGOs and cultural/citizens organisations, enterprises (including SMEs), natural heritage and green infrastructure management organisations, infrastructure and public service providers as well as other institutions which are affected by the thematic priorities concerned.

#### Methodological approach for the assessment of the project proposals

The MA of the ADRION programme is responsible for the coordination of the selection process of the project proposals performed by the JS. Main decision-making body is the “Monitoring Committee”, which is composed of representatives of the Member States of the Programme.

In accordance with the programme’s rules, each eligible application shall be assessed by at least two JS staff members (devoted to content and financial topics) and by an independent evaluator. Proposals shall be ranked according to their final score.

## **Selection process of ADRION projects**

Applications received within the deadline are subject to a selection process organized along the following steps:

- 1) Admissibility and eligibility checks;
- 2) Strategic Assessment;
- 3) Operational Assessment;
- 4) Financial capacity check (for private partners only);
- 5) State Aid check;
- 6) Anti-fraud check.

More specifically:

A. *Strategic assessment* - The appraisal criteria shall be:

- Project's context (relevance and strategy);
- Cooperation character;
- Partnership relevance;
- Project's contribution to programme's objectives.

An additional score shall be awarded to those operations which contribute to the implementation of the EUSAIR strategy.

B. *Operational assessment* - The appraisal criteria shall be:

- Management;
- Communication;
- Work plan;
- Budget.

Independent evaluators shall be engaged in the support of steps 2) and 3). The Operational Assessment is performed only if the Strategic Assessment has reached the minimum score as reported in the Programme Manual.

## **Tasks of the independent evaluators**

The selected evaluators shall be in charge of assessing the eligible project proposals by applying the pre-defined assessment criteria and using a standard assessment form (structured in criteria and sub-criteria) made available by the Programme.

The assessment shall require the analysis of the application in all its parts (content and financial) and the drafting of the assessment form.

Independent evaluators have to appraise each sub-criterion with a score, accompanied by a clear qualitative description (highlighting the strengths and weaknesses), justifying the given score as well as providing assessment conclusions per criterion and for the project proposal as a whole. The evaluator's conclusions must be presented in a clearly structured and comprehensive way, putting the JS in the position to justify a funding recommendation or rejection.

Should significant discrepancies be detected between the assessment of the independent evaluator and the JS evaluator, the former shall be asked to discuss his/her assessment report with the JS (preferably over the phone) and to agree on a common standpoint.

The JS shall be in charge of preparing a consolidated assessment sheet for each project. The consolidated assessment sheets, drafted on the basis of those elaborated by the JS members and the independent evaluators will be used by the Monitoring Committee as a baseline for its decision.

The independent evaluator shall also be asked to:

- a) support the JS in defining the conditions for improvements for those project proposals that are recommended for funding;
- b) support the JS in verifying that the conditions for improvements have been adopted by the project during the negotiation process.

Projects evaluation may be performed at experts' home or place of work ("remote evaluation"). The independent evaluators shall be asked to attend a workshop/conference aimed at presenting the activities to be done, the evaluation process and the documentation to be used, time line and use of eventual electronic data exchange system (e-MS).

The independent evaluators shall also be required to:

- be acquainted with the relevant programme documents (e.g.: Cooperation Programme, Programme Manual, application package);
- closely communicate, update and exchange information with the JS.