

## **ADRION Programme**

**Analysis of territorial challenges, needs and potentials of the Adriatic-Ionian Region and strategic options for post-2020 ADRION programme**

## **Terms of Reference**

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## 1. Background context

The INTERREG V-B Adriatic-Ionian Programme (ADRION) is one of the 15 transnational programmes of the programming period 2014-2020 and has been established on the legal framework of the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds.

The ADRION strategic Programme document (Cooperation Programme) was approved by the European Commission on 20 October 2015 (Decision (2015)7147). It includes a wide transnational area with more than 70 million inhabitants, and has distinct physical, environmental, socio-economic and cultural characteristics. Hence, it addresses all three dimensions of sustainability, including social, economic and environmental aspects but also institutional elements.

From a geo-political point of view, ADRION is a very heterogeneous Programme, involving four EU and four non-EU Partner States, making ADRION a unique case in European Territorial Cooperation and an interesting testing lab: *“Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are essential for progress on the countries’ respective European paths”*<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to this aspect, the relevant support provided by the Programme to the implementation of the European Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy – EUSAIR -<sup>2</sup> further increases the elements that make ADRION an interesting example of technical contribution to complex governance.

The ADRION overall objective is to act as a policy driver and governance innovator fostering European integration among Partner States, taking advantage from the rich natural, cultural and human resources primarily surrounding the Adriatic and Ionian sea basins, and covering an important terrestrial surface as well and enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Programme area.

The geographical area of ADRION overlaps with the one of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy (EUSAIR) and involves 8 countries (part of Italy - regions Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lombardia, Marche, Molise, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Puglia Sicilia, Umbria, Veneto), Croatia, Greece, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), primarily surrounding the Adriatic and Ionian sea basins and covering an important terrestrial surface as well.

The programme focuses on four thematic priorities:

Priority Axis 1 – Innovative and Smart Region;

Priority Axis 2 – Sustainable Region;

Priority Axis 3 – Connected Region;

Priority Axis 4 – Supporting the governance of EUSAIR.

The design of the ADRION Programme strategy has been closely aligned to EUSAIR pillars.

The programme encompasses a wide range of themes to be tackled through a wide array of instruments and possible actions, reflecting the heterogeneity of the Programme area and its diverse needs.

Target groups are national, regional and local public authorities, development agencies, universities and research institutes, chambers of commerce, innovation centres, SMEs and other relevant actors in the field of innovation, economic development, environment, transport and institutional capacity as well as the governance of EUSAIR.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission Communication *“A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans - COM(2018) 65 final.*

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem: *“To ensure their more effective participation, further integration into the existing knowledge networks in the EU should be foreseen, including research and innovation capacity building. Collaboration can be further developed under other initiatives, including EU macro-regional strategies”.*

Supported specific objectives, expected results, indicative actions, indicative types of beneficiaries and targets groups are described in the Cooperation Programme.

The Programme is co-financed by the European Union - ERDF and IPA II Funds.

ADRION relevant information can be found in the following link: <http://www.adrioninterreg.eu>.

The Programme language is English.

## 2. Scope of work

In view of the next programming period 2021-2027 and in accordance with art. 17 of the draft European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), each programme has to develop a joint strategy for the programme's contribution to the policy objectives set out in art. 4.1 of draft Common Provision Regulation (hereinafter: CPR) and to the Interreg specific objectives as in article 14.4 and 5 of draft ETC Regulation<sup>3</sup>.

The programme strategy shall include:

- a) the outcomes of the main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities, joint investment needs and complementarity with other forms of support, lessons learnt from past experience, macro-regional/sea-basin strategies affecting the programme area;
- b) a justification for the selected policy objectives and Interreg- specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support;
- c) related types of actions, including a list of planned operations of strategic importance, and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategy and sea-basin strategy.

The main objective of this work is to carry out a comprehensive territorial and socio-economic analysis of the Adriatic-Ionian area that will be the basis for the strategic discussion on the future drafting of the Cooperation Programme for the period 2021-2027.

The main goals of the present work shall be:

- To carry out a territorial and socio-economic analysis through the identification of the main challenges, needs and potentials of the current Adriatic-Ionian area and the Republic of North Macedonia as well as of the actors expressing those needs and/or being to unfold such potentials;
- To provide contributions for the identification of strategic topics that could be addressed by the future ADRION through its transnational projects, following the progressing of the negotiation process between the EU institutions and the Member States, and in accordance with the orientation paper provided by the European Commission (EC), EUSAIR Action Plan and its eventual revision, and any other national and/or transnational documents relevant for the analysis<sup>4</sup>.
- To elaborate strategic territorial and thematic scenarios.

All deliverables shall be drafted in English.

The analysis shall be based on:

- a) Desk research;

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<sup>3</sup> The proposed legislative package for the new Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 can be found at: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/2021\\_2027/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/)

<sup>4</sup> Additional documentation not publicly available shall be provided by ADRION Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat.

- b) Data and information directly collected by the contractor through *ad hoc* researches, interviews to relevant target groups and stakeholders.

Tasks under point b) shall be performed under the close coordination of ADRION Task Force.

### 3. Territorial and socio-economic analysis

The territorial and socio-economic analysis shall provide the backbone information for supporting the future ADRION Task Force on programming in its decision-making process.

#### 3.1. Analysis of the programme area

The analysis shall foresee:

- Analysis of challenges: the focus shall be on economic, social, environmental, political and governance elements, also taking into account future trends; the highlighted main points of strengths and of weaknesses of the cooperation area shall refer to the relevant policy objectives outlined in the EC proposal for 2021-2027 legislative package and to the future potential enlargement process<sup>5</sup>.

In order to better highlight the links between the challenges and the future trends of the area, the analysis shall also include overviews to allow investigations on elements that are currently supporting sustainable growth in the area, e.g.:

- Economic interactions (e.g. material flow and flows of goods, transnational value chains, green and circular economy; industrial transition; research and innovation; energy efficiency and renewable energies);
- Flow of people (e.g. demographic trends, labour market, education, migration);
- Environmental hazards (e.g.: air, water, habitats, floods, climate crises);
- Accessibility and connectivity (e.g.: services of general interest, broadband and ICT connectivity, digitalisation, transport corridors and services);
- The economic impact of cultural heritage in terms of GDP; investments required in the cultural heritage sector (e.g.: restoration and maintenance of cultural heritage);
- The absorption of EU funds directly managed by EC or by other international organizations (e.g.: World Bank<sup>6</sup>) in relevant programmes in the framework of research and innovation, culture and tourism, environment and transport.

The aim is to create an up-to-date picture of the current situation of flows and interconnections in the ADRION area. This should be done by zooming-in on existing studies and other relevant documents (e.g. Eurostat and other statistical data) and breaking down relevant results.

- Analysis of needs: the focus shall be based on the needs of addressing the challenges identified in the area and their holders, especially with regard to those target groups and stakeholders which can participate in- and/or can benefit of- transnational cooperation projects (private and non-private partners).
- Analysis of existing potentials: the focus shall be in relation to the capacity of the region to face the identified challenges, highlighting those endogenous resources most suitable to be strengthened

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<sup>5</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans - COM(2018) 65 final.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/brief/regional-strategy-for-innovation>

through transnational cooperation projects also in synergies with other initiatives/funds. The capacity of the region shall also be measured through its ability in grasping strategic approaches, like:

- The presence of smart specialization strategies;
- The existence of effective relevant networks and clusters (size, partners involved, location and affected topics);
- Presence of CCI - cultural and creative industries.

In relation to the above, the analysis shall also:

1. **Highlight interactions** among different challenges, needs and potentials, and their link with the relevant funding instruments, policies and initiatives expected to be available in post 2020;
2. **Identify the specific objectives** in accordance with their grouping as set forth in art. 4.1 of draft CPR, in art. 2 of draft ERDF Regulation and those specifically defined for ETC transnational cooperation (art. 14 of draft ETC Regulation);
3. **Match the identified specific objectives with those included in the current EUSAIR Action Plan and its eventual revision**, highlighting the eventual presence of discrepant elements.

### 3.2. *Structure of the analysis*

The research shall be structured according to the following:

1. Executive summary;
2. Methodology (including the EU, macro-regional and national frameworks);
3. Challenges of the Adriatic-Ionian area: national/regional background analysis (territorial, economic social) and cohesion analysis;
4. SWOT analysis, main territorial challenges of the Adriatic-Ionian area, with a focus on the needs of cooperation within the area.

### 3.3. *Approach and Methodology*

The contractor shall propose a detailed and coherent methodological approach and indicate the tools to be used for the execution of the exercise. The proposed methodology shall also include a categorization of the main challenges for the area to be further investigated in the further steps of the analysis.

It is expected that the contractor shall analyse the existing Programme documents prior to start the requested analysis, in particular the territorial and SWOT analyses performed for the drafting of 2014-2020 ADRION Cooperation Programme<sup>7</sup>.

The territorial and socio-economic analysis shall be based on:

- a) Desk research, carried out according to the screening of the draft EC draft legislative package, existing literature and policy reports issued by the EC, the European Council or European Parliament or any other European institutions/agencies, international organizations and national institutions, universities and research bodies (e.g.: EUROSTAT; EC Joint Research Centre, ESPON, etc.) or relevant data bases (e.g.: the KEEP database - [www.keep.eu](http://www.keep.eu));
- b) Direct (primary) data collection, with the aim of closing the gaps of available information (identified during the desk research), ensuring IPA Partner States data comparable with EU/Eurostat countries if necessary. Direct data collection shall include interviews conducted in person or through the

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/index.php/library/programme-document/>

telephone using pre-elaborated questionnaires to gather the opinions stakeholders from both public and private sectors working on different issues at national, urban or regional scales. The identified stakeholders – whose names shall be either prior defined by ADRION Task Force or approved by it – are those able to exert a relatively high influence on the development of the Adriatic-Ionian area. Ideally, they will include approximately one or two experts or civil servant per Partner State.

Data collection shall serve as empiric basis for the strategic territorial and thematic vision for the Adriatic-Ionian area post 2020 (see paragraph below).

The analysis shall be required to use cartography and GIS methods: related outcomes will be used as methods of presentation, according to the level of the type of visualized data, and shall be either qualitative or quantitative.

The outcomes of the analysis shall be presented in a draft report to ADRION Task Force post 2020 directly by the contractor on occasion of one of the planned meetings. On the basis of the received comments, the contractor shall prepare the final report on the analysis.

#### **4. Strategic territorial and thematic scenarios for the Adriatic-Ionian area post 2020**

Based on the identified development potentials, drivers and bottlenecks resulting from the territorial and socio-economic analysis, the contractor shall develop projections and scenarios according to those topics/sectors where transnational cooperation has a high potential to promote better integration across regions and which are of strategic relevance for regional development. This task should consider and reflect new challenges and recent development trends (e.g. economic transition to industry 4.0 as well as green and circular economy, migration and ageing, climate change, digitalisation, good governance etc.).

The strategic territorial and thematic scenarios shall provide strategic contributions to the decision makers at the Partner States level with regard to the required thematic concentrations for post 2020 and how proposed topics in transnational cooperation, governance mechanisms and solutions could be tailored to reduce economic and social disparities, foster integrated territorial development, and be consistent with all relevant recent strategic frameworks and preparatory works at EU, macro-regional, national and regional level.

Ideally, the scenarios and recommendations shall also link the thematic achievements of the current Adriatic-Ionian programme.

The strategic thematic scenarios shall be characterized by leading distinctive elements that should characterise ADRION post 2020, each other interlinked and/or characterized by common horizontal distinguishing elements (e.g.: a more environmentally sustainable area; a more innovative area, a more cohesive area) and consider, in particular, the following elements:

- a) The thematic concentration, as requested by art. 15 of draft ETC Regulation;
- b) The likely limited financial allocation.

The elaborated territorial and thematic scenarios will allow to start an evidence-based dialogue with the stakeholders. Such a dialogue might lead to the identification of a broad range of enablers, barriers and possible black swans and wild cards affecting the ADRION area, integration and territorial cohesion. ADRION decision-makers will then lead to the formulation of new policy pathways and necessary adjustments to ADRION vision and strategies.

The outcomes of the strategic territorial and thematic scenarios shall be presented in a draft report to ADRION Task Force post 2020 directly by the contractor on occasion of one of the planned meetings. On the basis of the received comments, the contractor shall prepare the final report.

## 5. The working team

In relation to the above, the offer shall include information on the team to be involved in the analysis, including its skills and qualifications, as well as a provision of contribution and related description by each team member in terms of working days.

The team is requested having the following experiences and competences:

- Proven experience in European projects and studies of territorial development issues, including experience in policy-relevant and comparative analyses in the future programme area and/or transnational multi-disciplinary research activities. The track record should cover the past 5 years.
- Good knowledge of Adriatic-Ionian territorial policy and cohesion development.
- Specialised technical expertise and knowledge related to data collection, spatial data analysis and mapping territorial trends;
- A very good knowledge of English and ability to communicate and draft texts in high-quality standard.

The competences and experience of the team within the fields outlined above shall be clearly demonstrated and documented in the CVs submitted.

The composition of the team shall be specified in the offer and must be kept unchanged, as far as possible, for the duration of the contract. The possible substitution of team members, upon motivated request, is allowed only if the substitutes present a similar or more qualified curriculum vitae than the one of the replaced persons. The replacement shall in any case be communicated to the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat and authorized in written. Involvement of experts of the analysed countries shall be considered as an asset.

## 6. Deliverables and time schedule

Taking into account of the specific timing available for the assignment, the contractor shall ensure the availability of the proposed working team already at the time of the inception phase of the assignment.

The overall analysis shall be finalized and its deliverables submitted in their approved and final version no later than end of April/beginning of May 2020.

The following deliverables are expected from the contractor:

**INCEPTION REPORT:** Once the contract is signed, the ADRION Managing Authority (MA)/Joint Secretariat (JS) shall organise a kick-off meeting with the appointed experts to introduce each other, clarify open points and define the content of the Inception Report.

The Inception Report shall be drafted by the contractor and describe more in details the adopted methodology to carry out the tasks included in the present Terms of Reference. In particular, the Inception Report shall provide clarifications following the eventual requests for improvement formulated by ADRION MA/JS, e.g.: additional coverage of desk research and fieldwork; methodology proposed, ways of coordination with ADRION MA/JS; internal coordination and division of work within the experts' team (in particular in case of consortium).

**TERRITORIAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS:** the analysis shall be structured in accordance with paragraph 3 of the present Terms of Reference.

**STRATEGIC TERRITORIAL AND THEMATIC SCENARIOS:** the report shall be structured in accordance with paragraph 4 of the present Terms of Reference.

**FINAL DELIVERABLE:** the complete exercise – territorial and socio-economic analysis and strategic territorial and thematic scenarios shall be provided in one document and supported by an executive summary reporting the main findings of the two key sections.

Main milestones and deliveries	Time of delivery
<b>Inception report</b>	End of January 2020
<b>Submission of the draft territorial and socio-economic analysis report containing the following:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Challenges of the Adriatic-Ionian area: national/regional background analysis (territorial, economic social) and cohesion analysis;</li> <li>○ SWOT analysis, main territorial challenges of the Adriatic-Ionian area, with a focus on the needs of cooperation within the area</li> </ul> <b>Strategic territorial and thematic scenarios for the Adriatic-Ionian area post 2020</b>	End of February/beginning of March 2020
<b>Presentation of the outcomes of the analysis and proposed future scenarios at ADRION Task Force post 2020 meeting</b>	March 2020
<b>Final territorial and socio-economic analysis report and Strategic territorial and thematic scenarios for the Adriatic-Ionian area post 2020</b>	April 2020

The contractor shall also be expected to participate, present and discuss the findings on occasion of Task Force meeting (one meeting planned) and to attend up to two meetings with ADRION MA/JS at their premises in Bologna (Italy).

## **7. Management arrangements: role of the ADRION Task Force, Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat**

ADRION MA/JS shall be responsible for the coordination of the contractor and for the regular execution of the service.

The JS shall be the main provider of information on the Programme, also with regard to the implementation and progressing of independent programme evaluation and other activities relevant to the analysis; it shall also be in charge of spreading the elaborated questionnaires and/or collecting them (reference to paragraph 3.3).

ADRION Task Force post 2020 shall be responsible for discussing the territorial and socio-economic analysis and the strategic territorial and thematic scenarios and for approving them.

All official communications with the programme bodies shall be conducted in English.

## 8. Technical awarding criteria

ID	Assessment criteria	Description	Scores
1	Quality of the proposed methodology	<p><i>This criterion will assess the degree to which the proposed methodology shows the capacity to collect, analyse and report documents and data.</i></p> <p><u>Sub-criterion 1.1</u> - Capacity to collect, analyse, review and evaluate documents and data, in accordance with the scope of the present Terms of Reference.</p> <p><u>Sub-criterion 1.2</u> - Capacity and understanding of the task to interpret and organize the analysis in a way that facilitates the gathering of the necessary evidence.</p> <p><u>Sub-criterion 1.3</u> - Capacity to organise the gathering of evidence from different sources, including carrying out stakeholder consultations.</p> <p><u>Sub-criterion 1.4</u> - Capacity to evaluate, combine and summarise the collected data and information.</p>	40
2	Organisation of the work and resources	<p><i>This criterion will assess the proposed team, including the overall allocation of time and resources for the elaboration of the foreseen deliverables, and their adequacy.</i></p> <p><u>Sub-criterion 1.1</u> – Composition and profile of the working team. Involvement of experts of the analysed countries shall be considered as an asset.</p> <p><u>Sub-criterion 1.2</u> – Knowledge and experience in European projects and studies of territorial development issues, including experience from policy-relevant and comparative analyses with a European coverage and/or transnational multi-disciplinary research activities (track record covering the past 5 years); Good knowledge of the future programme area territorial policy and cohesion development; Specialised technical expertise and knowledge related to data collection, spatial data analysis and mapping territorial trends.</p> <p><u>Sub-criterion 1.3</u> – Adequacy of allocation of time and resources to each foreseen deliverables, and whether this allocation is adequate for the work.</p>	30
3	Quality control measures	<p><i>This criterion will assess the quality control system applied concerning the quality of the deliverables. The quality system should be detailed and specific to the tasks; a generic quality system will result in a low score.</i></p>	10