

INTERREG EURO-MED PROGRAMME 2021 – 2027**INTERREG IPA ADRIATIC –IONIAN “IPA ADRION” 2021-2027****INTERREG URBACT 2021-2027****INTERREG EUROPE 2021- 2027****TERMS OF REFERENCE****Call for the selection of 1 (one) Joint Head of First Level Control Office, located in Tirana****Introduction:**

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme supports cooperation across Mediterranean borders. The Programme brings together partners from 69 regions of 14 countries from the Northern shore of the Mediterranean, among which 10 EU countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain) plus 4 IPA candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia), with a common objective: a climate neutral and resilient society for the benefit of its citizens. The Interreg Euro-MED Programme is a European territorial cooperation programme at transnational level. Its general objective is contained both in the word "cooperation" and in the three adjectives that define it by regulation: territorial, European, transnational. This will constitute the general objective of Interreg Euro-MED: to promote joint reflection in order to implement shared solutions and thus strengthen the cohesion of our European area. Albania participates in this programme with its whole territory.

The Managing Authority (MA) of the Programme is responsible for managing and implementing the programme on behalf of the participating partner countries. The managing authority of Interreg Euro-MED is the Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur Region. The Joint Secretariat (JS) provides information to potential beneficiaries, instructs the projects applications and supports partners in the implementation of their projects. Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat are both based in Marseille (France). In Albania, the National Authority in charge for the coordination of the Programme is the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC). 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.

The Interreg IPA Adriatic – Ionian “IPA ADRION” 2021-2027 Programme is co-funded by the European Union through the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA III). The IPA ADRION Programme is a European transnational programme that invests in regional innovation systems,

cultural and natural heritage protection, environmental resilience, sustainable transport and capacity building. By bringing together 10 Partner States across the Adriatic-Ionian region, IPA ADRION fosters European integration and acts as policy driver for the benefit of more than 70 million people. IPA ADRION provides with a funding scheme for public authorities (local, regional and national bodies), research institutions, NGOs, and private companies. The Programme launches Call for Proposals, which cover a wide range of topics according to its thematic priorities. IPA Adrion has a total budget of 160,810 million euros.

The Programme is under the management of the Emilia-Romagna Region, Directorate General for Resources, Europe, Innovation, and Institutions. The eligible area of the programme encompasses ten countries: four EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Slovenia), five non-EU Partner States (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) and one third country (San Marino). The program's main objective is to improve the region's attractiveness, competitiveness, and connectivity in order to grow the economy and create jobs. It also aims to protect the environment and guarantee healthy, balanced marine and coastal ecosystems in the Adriatic-Ionian region by implementing joint initiatives between national and regional institutional and non-profit entities and by creating digital tools.

The Managing Authority of the Programme is the Emilia-Romagna Region, and the Joint Secretariat HQ is located in Bologna, Italy. In Albania, the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC) serves as the National Authority responsible for coordinating the Programme, with a National Contact Point (NCP) located in Tirana. The National Authority's responsibilities include overseeing Albania's management and control system, ensuring that all expenditures by Albanian beneficiaries conform to applicable European Union (PRAG) and National Rules.

Interreg Europe is an interregional cooperation programme, co-funded by the European Union. The European Union strives to reduce disparities in the levels of development, growth and quality of life in and across Europe's regions. Our programme contributes to this objective and runs from 2021 to 2027.

It helps local, regional and national governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy, creates an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions to regional development issues. Support the exchange of good practices and policy learning among European regions in 36 countries - the EU27 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Ukraine.

This programme has a budget of 394 million euros from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Close to 90% is earmarked for interregional cooperation projects. The rest will fund the Platform's policy-learning services and technical assistance for the programme's implementation.

URBACT Programme drives change for better cities. Since 2002, URBACT has been driving change all over Europe by enabling the cooperation and idea exchange amongst cities within thematic networks, by building the skills of local stakeholders in the design and implementation of integrated and participatory policies, and by sharing knowledge and good city practices.

Cities are at the forefront of today's greatest challenges and opportunities. Climate change, intergenerational gaps and digital disruption are just some common turning points for European cities. And yet, cities are also home to cultural diversity, economic opportunities and essential services. It's by sharing experiences with other cities that we can harness the many opportunities of sustainable urban development. This is where URBACT comes in.

URBACT promotes integrated development to support cities implement horizontal and vertical policy integration. Positive change can best be made when local authorities collaborate with different levels of governance (regional, national, EU) –vertical integration – and when they tackle challenges and problems in a holistic way that considers environmental, economic, and social dimensions at the same time – horizontal integration. URBACT has developed a series of processes and tools, as a part of the URBACT Method. It encourages cities to re-think centralised governance structures and shift towards more inclusive and holistic models. URBACT's participatory approach recognises that sustainable urban development is driven by action-oriented strategies, which are co-created and implemented with local people.

In Albania, a centralized first level control system is in place.¹ The First Level Control (FLC) Office in Albania is established in the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC). The staff of the FLC Office is composed by 1 (one) Joint Head of First Level Control and 4 (four) FLC officers. 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.

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 based on supporting documents and evidence provided by the partners and the data entered in the Jems Monitoring System. 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 places where the project is being implemented in line with the sampling methodology established by the Programme and also on request of the National Authority, according to the sample drawn by the Managing Authority.

¹ According to Article 46 (9) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059

The Joint 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 Euro-MED Programme 2021-2027, by the Interreg IPA ADRIAN Programme, by the INTERREG Europe Programme and by the INTERREG Urbact Programme, through the supervision of the work of the first level controllers. The Head reports directly to the National Authority on the functioning of the centralised FLC system.

Duties and Responsibilities

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 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

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

Programme;

- **Principle of documented evidence** requiring that expenditure have 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), Monitoring Committee (MC), Accounting Authority (AcA), 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.
- Cooperates with the Joint Secretariat, the National Authority and the National Contact Point with the scope of assisting and advising Albanian beneficiaries/partners, including for the preparation of guidance documents, and participates, if requested, in information sessions for potential partners organized in Albania.
- 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.
- 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, be they 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 workload 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 7 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 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; 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 a Master's degree or post-graduate qualification in either 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), preferably.
3. Experience in management or technical support of Interreg Programmes;
4. Experience in management of public procurement procedures (national and PRAG);
5. The knowledge of French is an asset;
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 Euro-MED Programme:
<https://interreg-euro-med.eu/>
 - b. Contestants/participants are expected to have a good knowledge of the Interreg IPA Adriatic – Ionian "IPA ADRION" 2021-2027:
<https://www.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/>
 - c. Contestants/participants are expected to have a good knowledge of the Interreg URBACT IV Programme 2021-2027
<https://urbact.eu/>

- d. Contestants/participants are expected to have a good knowledge of the Interreg Europe Programme 2021-2027

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/>

- e. Good Knowledge of PRAG Rules:

<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki>

Good knowledge of the Albanian Labor Code:

<https://qbz.gov.al/preview/c1c18a6c-5f3e-457d-b931-de505b3c7ed0>

1. 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.