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IPA Bulgaria – Türkiye



(INTERREG VI-A) IPA BULGARIA TÜRKİYE PROGRAMME

CCI 2021TC16IPCB005 GUIDELINES FOR PRE-DEFINED APPLICANT

Call for proposal

No 2021TC16IPCB005 – 2025 – 5

Restricted Call for Project Proposal

under Priority 2 – Integrated development of the cross-border region

*Strategic objective 2 “Development of better access to services of general
interest” of the Territorial Strategy*

Deadline for submission of project proposal: 2025

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Preface


These are the Guidelines for Applicants, which will serve as an essential reference document for the pre-defined applicant applying for funding under the Call for Project Proposal within the framework of the (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme. The Guidelines for Applicants include the following integral parts, which must be considered in their entirety by the Applicant:

- Attachments:
 - Attachment 1 “Application Form” - contains important information about access to the electronic system and how to fill the Application Form;
 - Attachment 2 “State Aid¹ and De Minimis Provisions” – contains important information about the rules for financing of state aid relevant activities;
 - Attachment 3 “Complaint Procedure” – contains important information about the stages, requirements, steps and deadlines which the applicant must observe in case it decides to launch a complaint against the decisions of the Monitoring Committee regarding project’ selection and financing;
 - Attachment 4 “Definitions of indicators” – contains important information about output and result indicators.
- Annexes (A1-A4) to the Application form – contain templates of all declarations that must be submitted by the project partners together with the project proposal;
- Annex C “Subsidy contract” – draft version (for information purposes only).

It is recommended that the pre-defined applicant submitting the proposal under the current call should examine carefully, besides the present Guidelines for Applicants, the Programme Document and the Territorial Strategy under (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme, which are available on the website of the Programme: <https://ipa-bgtr.mrrb.bg>

Explanation of text-box

Across the following pages you will find a highlighted text boxes – marked “**Important**”.

 **IMPORTANT** - highlights the most important elements to be taken into account when preparing a project.

Legal Basis

In the elaboration of these Guidelines for Applicants the following legal provisions have been observed:

Basic EU legal acts:

¹ Project partners registered in Türkiye should follow the applicable national regulations provisions set out in Regulation (EU) 2023/2831 and regarding State aid.

- Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III);
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments;
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy;
- Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union;
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund.

Basic programme documents:

- (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme approved by European Commission of 22.11.2022 by Decision C/2022/8612, with programme reference number CCI 2021TC16IPCB005, including Appendix 3;
- Territorial Strategy under (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme.

National legislation

Besides EU rules and rules of the Programme, national legislation in force ruling specific fields such as environmental interventions, natural and cultural heritage, construction, human resources, public procurements, etc. has to be respected.

Please note that all these legal provisions must be observed by the applicant during both project preparation and implementation phases.

1 General Information

These Guidelines for Applicants aim at providing practical information under (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme.

It is the most practical level of information needed for the successful submission of a project proposal under this programme. These Guidelines for Applicants provide information on how to develop a project idea/proposal, to fill in the application form, budget and related forms, the application procedure, the project selection criteria, the decision procedure and other practical advices.

IMPORTANT

Please read carefully these Guidelines for Applicants in order to avoid confusion!

The present version of the document is only relevant in connection to the **Call for predefined Proposal** under the (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme 2021-2027. Please bear in mind that this Call for proposal only concerns Priority 2, Strategic objective 2 of the Territorial Strategy.

The possible modifications in the Application package will be communicated via the Programme website <https://ipa-bgtr.mrrb.bg>.

1.1. Overview of (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme

This programme is co-financed by the European Union through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III and co-financed by Bulgaria and Türkiye through contributions from state budgets. Own co-financing by the project beneficiaries is allowed.

The programme document drafted jointly by the two countries through a wide partnership with national, regional and local stakeholders was approved by the European Commission on 22.11.2022 (Decision C(2022)8612). It sets out the general framework of intervention of IPA III in the Programme cross-border area. The programme document is available at <https://ipa-bgtr.mrrb.bg/index.php/en/node/3>

1.1.1 Programme area

The Programme area is determined in accordance with the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/75 of 17 January 2022 setting out the list of Interreg programme areas to receive support from the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments of the Union, broken down by strand and Interreg programme under the European territorial cooperation goal.

The Programme area includes the districts of **Burgas**, **Yambol** and **Haskovo** in Republic of Bulgaria and provinces of **Edirne** and **Kırklareli** in Republic of Türkiye.

1.1.2 Programme Strategy

The strategic and thematic scope of the (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye fully corresponds with the IPA III programming framework. The programme is expected to contribute to the enlargement process and at the same time to the strengthening of the territorial cohesion taking into account socio-economic opposite trends that are currently undergoing across the CB area. The policy and strategic framework of the programme is a result of a three-year long elaboration process. The identified tendencies and challenges are related to continuing and still unresolved territorial challenges (such as lack of diverse possibilities for work, weak employability skills, high poverty risk and social exclusion,

low income, uneven economic and year-round tourism development across the CB area, etc.); sharp sectoral disparities in the CB area due to the number of opposite demographic, health and economic trends across the region; need to provide equal access for the SMEs to programme resources and perceive the enterprises as change boosters addressing their specific needs; perspectives of establishing cross-border added value chains in certain sectors (especially in the energy sector); need for more cross-border coordinated actions in the energy and environmental fields. Irregular migration and need of strengthening the level of institutional and operational cooperation in the field of migration management are among identified challenges.

1.1.3 The programme overall objective

The strategy, set out to address the specific needs of the border area both in the short and long term, supports the following overall objective:

To strengthen the territorial cohesion of the Bulgaria - Türkiye cross-border region

Based on the experience of the previous two programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, as well as on various analyses of the Programme area, the following three of the proposed by European Commission Policy Objectives (Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and Article 3 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1058) were chosen to be the basis for selection of the Priorities of the Programme:

- ✓ PO 2: A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility
- ✓ PO 5: A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives
- ✓ ISO 2: A safer and more secure Europe

IMPORTANT

For further details on programme strategy, please refer to the programme document available at: <https://ipa-bgtr.mrrb.bg/index.php/en/node/3>.

1.1.4 Programme Priorities

In order to achieve the objectives set out in the programme document, the partnering countries have jointly agreed upon the main “Priorities” on which the projects under this programme should focus – “Environmentally-friendly cross-border region”, “Integrated development of the cross-border region” and “More secure cross-border region”.

The current call is focused on Priority 2 “Integrated development of the cross-border region”, Specific Objective “Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local

development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas” (Strategic objective 2 “Development of better access to services of general interest” of the Territorial Strategy).

1.1.5 Restricted call project justification

The effects of climate change are already being felt around the world and are expected to become more frequent and intense in the coming decades. Climate changes lead to an increase in the number of incidents and require the intervention of the responsible institutions more frequently. The current call aims to strengthen the capacity of authorities to ensure effective responsiveness to climate change through prevention and reaction to climate-related risks, including civil protection and awareness raising.

1.1.6 Programme Indicators

For the 2021-2027 period, a set of common indicators was defined in the ERDF Regulation, allowing easier and more consistent reporting across programmes. Among these are Interreg specific indicators, which are tailored to the types of outputs and results that Interreg projects typically produce, broad enough to capture most project actions, and allowing a good comparison and aggregation with other programmes.

The table below summarizes the Programme output and result indicators relevant for this Call:

| ID | Indicator | Target Value | Definition |
|-------------------|---|---------------|--|
| Output indicators | | | |
| RCO28 | Area covered by protection measures against wildfires | 588 200,00 ha | Surface area covered by protection measures against wildfires developed or significantly upgraded through supported projects. Significant upgrades refer, for example, to new functionalities for protection or upscaling of existing protection measures. |
| RCO84 | Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | 2 | The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices. In order to be counted by this indicator, - the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented within the project |

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|--|
| | | | <p>and</p> <p>- the implementation of the pilot action should be finalised by the end of the project.</p> <p>Jointly developed pilot action implies the involvement of organizations from the two participating countries in its implementation.</p> |
| RCO116 | Jointly developed solutions | 2 | <p>The indicator counts the number of jointly developed solutions from joint pilot actions implemented by supported projects. In order to be counted in the indicator, an identified solution should include indications of the actions needed for it to be taken up or to be upscaled.</p> <p>A jointly developed solution implies the involvement of organizations from the two participating countries in the drafting and design process of the solution.</p> |
| Result indicators | | | |
| RCR36 | Population benefiting from wildfire protection measures | 290 000 persons | <p>Population living in areas exposed to wildfire risks and where vulnerability to wildfires decreases as a result of the supported projects. The indicator covers protection measures which are clearly localised in high risk areas and which address directly wildfires risks, as opposed to more general measures implemented at national or regional level.</p> |
| RCR104 | Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | 2 | <p>The indicator counts the number of solutions, other than legal or administrative solutions, that are developed by supported projects and are taken up or upscaled during the implementation of the project or within one year after project completion. The organisation adopting the solutions developed by the project may or may not be a participant in the project. The uptake / up-scaling should be documented by the adopting organisations in, for instance, strategies, action plans etc.</p> |

When preparing the Application Form, the applicant should provide quantification of programme's output and result indicators, relevant to the Call.

IMPORTANT

The project must ensure as a minimum the achievement of the target value of programme output and result indicators listed above.

More information is available in Attachment 4 “Definitions of indicators”.

1.2. Programme Implementation Structures

According to the Interreg Regulations 2021/1059 from 24 June 2021, the two partnering countries have established the following main management and implementation bodies:

Managing Authority (MA) – Territorial Cooperation Management Directorate at Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of the Republic of Bulgaria is designated to perform the functions of Managing Authority under (Interreg-VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme (CCI 2021TC16IPCB005) as laid down in Articles 72, 74 and 75 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060. The Managing Authority is responsible for managing and implementing the cross-border cooperation programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management.

National Authority (NA) – The Directorate for EU Affairs within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Republic of Türkiye is the counterpart for the Managing Authority and is in charge of the coordination of the Programme in Türkiye. The National Authority supports the Managing Authority in the process of management and overall implementation of the Programme.

Monitoring Committee (MC) is formed of representatives of MA, NA, the European Commission, as well as other relevant national, regional and local authorities and stakeholders. The MC shall supervise the overall effectiveness, quality and coherence of the implementation of all actions towards meeting the objectives set out in the Programme and the relevant strategy papers.

Joint Secretariat (JS) is a common structure that assists the programme management bodies in carrying out their respective functions and it is the main contact point between the Programme and the potential beneficiaries/project partners. JS-main office is based in Haskovo (Republic of Bulgaria), and JS-branch office is based in Edirne (Republic of Türkiye).

Bodies Involved in the Territorial Strategy Management:

Strategy Board (SB): A bilateral partnership structure formed in accordance with Article 29 of the Interreg Regulation. The SB oversees project selection, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Territorial Strategy under (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme. Its members, including public authorities, NGOs, enterprises, and academic institutions, represent key stakeholders from the partner countries.

Operational Unit (OU): Supporting the SB with administrative tasks, the OU functions as part of the Joint Secretariat of the Programme.

1.3. Programme Financial Allocation for the Restricted Call for Project Proposal

The total budget available for the present call is 5 176 470 EUR of which 4 399 999 EUR EU financial contribution (ERDF+IPA funds) and 776 471 EUR national contributions from national budgets of the partnering countries.

2 Rules of the Call for Proposals

2.1 Cross-border impact

The Project Proposal must be effective and efficient in order to tackle common challenges identified jointly in the border region and to match the territory's needs as envisaged by the Programme's objectives and results. The project must deliver direct cross-border impact and benefits for the project partners, the main target groups and the Programme area. The partners should clearly demonstrate that the cross-border approach has been respected in the project proposal.

A clear cross-border impact could be found in these cases where the implementation of the projects ensures tangible results in the cross-border area (in both countries); otherwise the effect would be at regional level.

Through implementation of the planned activities (which are designed for facing certain specific needs of the cross-border area, partners and the main target groups), the project shall contribute to achievement of the overall Programme objective to strengthen the territorial cohesion of the cross-border region. This means that when formulating the project idea, all partners should think about the impact of the project not only for their own organisations and the target groups, but also for the Programme area. Establishment of a partnership among organizations from the two countries by definition brings a cross-border character to the project, but only by itself this is not enough to ensure the direct cross-border impact and added value to the Programme area – rather, it is necessary that the combination of all project activities demonstrate achievement of distinct results in the cross-border area.

2.1.1 Cooperation criteria

Direct cross-border impact is understood in terms of respecting the following cooperation criteria:

Joint development (mandatory) means that the project must be designed in close cooperation of the partners from both sides of the border. This means that project proposals must clearly integrate the ideas, needs, priorities and contributions of stakeholders on both sides of the border. The Lead Partner

is the coordinator of this process but should include other partners from the beginning of the development process.

Joint implementation (mandatory) means that activities must be carried out and coordinated among partners from both sides of the border. It is not enough that activities run in parallel. There must be clear content-based links between what is happening on either side of the border and regular contact between the two sides. The Lead Partner is responsible for ensuring that activities are properly coordinated, that schedules are kept and that the right quality levels are achieved.

Joint staffing means that there will be a single project team within the project. The project staff should not have duplicate functions on either side of the border and project team members should work together on the project. The partners should not merely carry out activities in parallel without mutual coordination and exchange of information, but the project team will be responsible for project activities on both sides of the border.

Joint financing means that there will be only one contract per project and there must therefore be one joint project budget. The budget should be divided between partners according to the activities carried out. There is also only one project bank account for the EU contribution (held by the Lead Beneficiary) and payments representing EU support are made from the programme to this account. The Lead Beneficiary is responsible for administration and distribution of these funds and for reporting on their use. Funding should come from both sides of the border and illustrates the commitment by each partner to the joint project. The distribution of financial resources should reflect tasks and responsibilities of the partners. The rights and obligations of each partner in view of project implementation (including transfer of funds and payments) are included in the Partnership agreement.

IMPORTANT

The project partners from the two participating countries have to cooperate mandatory in both joint development and joint implementation and additionally in at least one of two other cooperation criteria: joint staffing or joint financing.

2.2 Horizontal principles

The (Interreg VI-A) IPA Bulgaria- Türkiye Programme places an important role to the inclusion of horizontal principles in the planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the project activities. During the whole life cycle of the projects, beneficiaries are requested to consider transversal actions to the projects' activities, taking into account the horizontal principles of the EU.

More precisely, actions should be planned, implemented and reported considering the following horizontal principles:

1. Sustainable development as set out in Article 11 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, the "Do No Significant Harm" principle – specific actions addressed to a direct positive impact on sustainable

development (environmental, social, ecological, cultural and economic), and to promotion of affordable and clean energy, decent and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, responsible consumption and reduction and climate actions. Full respect of the Union environmental acquis should be ensured by the projects.

The project and interventions can integrate measures to consider the principle of sustainable development, e.g. by:

- actively tackle wider environmental, social, ecological, cultural and economic concerns.

2. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation – specific actions to promote equal opportunities and prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, design and implementation of the project, taking account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination, and in particular, the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

All interventions, being implemented through the Programme can integrate measures to consider the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, e.g. by:

- actively tackle concerns of demographic change;
- actively tackle concerns of peripherality.

3. Equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective - promotion of equality between men and women and, where appropriate, the arrangements to ensure the integration of the gender main streaming perspective at programme and operation level.

The project and interventions of the Programme can integrate measures such as:

- Actively tackle wider equality concerns;
- Integrate equal participation of women and men;
- Contribute to a better and more diversified labour market for women

Project partners shall describe in the application how they particularly consider and promote the abovementioned horizontal principles in their activities and which specific actions are implemented in reference to them. Furthermore, partners are advised to include measures in the proposal that will contribute to the diminishing of the environmental impact of their actions. During the screening of application, consideration is given to the project's adherence to the horizontal principles and the quality of the planned specific actions. Approved project will report regularly to the Programme its achievements. The measures planned in the beginning of the project and consequently developed by the end of the project considering the horizontal principles will be further monitored by the Programme. Finally, the contribution and consideration of horizontal principles in project will be examined in the Programme's evaluation.

2.3 Applicable law and public procurement

The beneficiaries have the possibility to award service, supply and works contracts to contractors. Contractors are neither partners nor associates. The award of contracts to them is subject to the procurement rules in accordance with Article 58 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments.

When the project partners are located in Bulgaria and are a contracting authority or a contracting entity within the meaning of the Union law applicable to public procurement procedures, they shall apply national laws, regulations and administrative provisions (Public procurement act (Закон за обществените поръчки) and Government decree no. 4/2024 (Постановление ПМС №4/11.01.2024 г. за определяне на правилата за разглеждане и оценяване на оферти и сключването на договорите в процедурата за избор с публична покана от бенефициенти на безвъзмездна финансова помощ от Европейските фондове при споделено управление).

The project partners located in Türkiye shall refer to Annex II of the Financing Agreement between Türkiye and EC, as well as applicable provisions on public procurements as specified in the Project Implementation Manual.

To this end, the following provisions shall be fulfilled by the project beneficiaries:

- When sub-contracting the activities in order to achieve the project objectives, the contracting must be done by a transparent tendering procedure, following the above rules.
- The project or any sub-contracting procedures must not create an economic advantage to an economic operator.
- All studies or other project results shall be made available for free to all interested individual or legal persons, in a non-discriminatory way. Making the studies available only for certain individual or legal persons is strictly forbidden.

2.4 Communication and Visibility

The communication and publicity measures for the interventions funded by the (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria-Türkiye Programme aim to highlight the role of the European Union, enhance transparency and ensure a consistent and recognizable image of the Programme throughout participating countries. Communication activities should be properly planned and focus on the impact of the project actions.

In order to maximise the impact of communication efforts, the following principles should be observed:

- ✓ Communication activities should be integrated into implementation to reflect and support project objectives;
- ✓ Communication activities need to be timely and relevant to ensure engagement and impact;

- ✓ Communication activities should be appropriate in terms of resources spent and expected outcomes;
- ✓ Shared information must be accurate, clear and consistent;
- ✓ The right audience should be targeted to ensure effective outreach.

Applicants are expected to develop a mix of actions using different tools that can ensure an appropriate level of visibility to reach out the identified target groups. The following non exhausting list of communication channels and activities might be applied by the applicants:

- ✓ Digital communication channels and tools: social media, websites, podcasts, electronic newsletters, virtual events, online articles and blogs, forums;
- ✓ Public events: information and awareness campaigns, workshops, seminars, training sessions, study visits, stakeholder meetings;
- ✓ Standard communication channels: press releases, press conferences, media visits, articles in print media, radio/TV broadcasts;
- ✓ Audio-visual content and photography: video, podcasts, photography;
- ✓ Print materials and promotional items: roll up banners, billboards, branded stationery;
- ✓ Mandatory visibility elements for investments: signage and branding on infrastructure, buildings, vehicles and other supplies including billboards, information boards, plaques, stickers in accordance with Programme visibility rules.

Communication activities must be foreseen in the Application form and budgeted for by respecting the requirements of branding and communication established by the European regulations and the Programme. Before drafting the project proposal, it is essential to refer to the mandatory publicity and communication rules laid down in:

- ✓ Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Union and of the Council of 24 June 2021, articles 47 and 50, Annex IX;
- ✓ Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021, Article 36;
- ✓ Communication strategy of the (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme that is available at the Programme website: <https://ipa-bgtr.mrrb.bg/en/node/3> ;
- ✓ the present Guidelines for Pre-defined Applicants.

When drafting the project proposal, compliance with the following requirements should be ensured:

- ✓ Communication is an essential component of implementation not only for amplifying the visibility of the project results with media, institutions, key stakeholders and the general public, but also for demonstrating value for money of EU funding, i.e. how public money is spent and for which purposes, thus boosting awareness of the benefits of the EU on people's lives, highlighting at the same time the added value of working together to address challenges that know no borders.

- ✓ Applicants are invited to demonstrate the broad purpose of the project approach to communication, highlighting how they will raise awareness, disseminate knowledge, change mindset, showcase impact and benefits, engage with people, etc.
- ✓ In addition, beneficiaries should pay special attention in identifying clearly the communication target groups, that shall be reached using appropriate media tools.
- ✓ The ultimate goal of a successful communication strategy is to reach those far from the Interreg “world”, bringing to them positive, impactful and transformative, human-focused stories connected to the most pressing challenges of our time.
- ✓ Programme branding illustrative elements have to be clearly and visibly displayed on documents and communication material relating to the implementation of the Interreg operation attended for the general public and participants;
- ✓ The project must use the logo provided by the Programme/Interreg brand manual, in accordance with the provisions of the Programme;
- ✓ Promotional materials should preferably be “eco-friendly” in line with the Communication strategy of the (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme;
- ✓ Communication activities and objectives must be directly integrated in the work packages to allow the communication strategy to be fully embedded in the project’s overall strategy;
- ✓ Communication activities towards the general public should be carried out in the language of the participants and an appropriate translation or interpretation services shall be provided;
- ✓ Being a key component of a project’s branding it is important to decide on a project acronym that is short, easy to pronounce and remember, meaningful, catchy and intuitive, and has a meaning associated with the project’s theme.

IMPORTANT

In accordance with Art. 36 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Article 50 and Annex IX to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 project partners should:

1. provide on the partner’s official website or social media sites, where such sites exist, a short description of the Interreg operation, proportionate to the level of support provided, including its aims and results, and highlighting the financial support from the Interreg fund.
2. envisage production and installation of durable plaques or billboards, clearly visible to the public as soon as the physical implementation of an Interreg operation involving physical investment or the purchase of equipment starts or purchased equipment is installed, with regard to operations supported by an Interreg fund, the total cost of which exceeds EUR 100 000.
3. envisage the organization of a communication event and involving the Commission and the Managing Authority in a timely manner for operations of strategic importance and operations whose total cost exceed EUR 5 000 000.

Although not mandatory, creating a **dedicated project website** is highly recommended as it promotes transparency, strengthens stakeholder communication, and facilitates alignment with Programme-level dissemination efforts.

Additionally, sharing project updates and achievements on **social media** is strongly encouraged. To maximize outreach and engagement, it is suggested that at least one dedicated social media page be created and maintained with regular updates throughout the project's implementation.

Given the scale of the project, project partners are advised to allocate a reasonable budget for the production of at least two short videos (not exceeding 3 minutes) to be shared through appropriate communication channels - one at the commencement of the project to introduce it, and another at its conclusion to highlight the project's outcomes. Additional videos documenting project activities and achievements are also encouraged.

Beneficiaries should be aware that expenditures which do not comply with the applicable rules in terms of communication cannot be claimed, even if they are included in the approved Application form.

IMPORTANT

When remedial actions or amendments to violated requirements are not possible, in accordance with paragraph 6 of Article 36 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, the Managing Authority shall apply measures, taking into account the principle of proportionality, by cancelling up to 2% of the support from the funds awarded to any beneficiary who fails to comply with their obligations on transparency and communication.

More detailed practical guidelines (including templates) concerning the basic communication and publicity measures are provided by the European Commission in the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions, published on the following EU website: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/communication-visibility-requirements-2018_en.pdf.

More information about the new Interreg branding can be found on: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2021/12/17-12-2021-new-interreg-branding-for-the-2021-2027-period.

2.5 Eligibility Criteria

The present call for proposal is open for Priority 2 "Integrated development of the cross-border region", Specific objective "Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas" (Strategic objective 2 "Development of better access to services of general interest" of the Territorial Strategy).

In order to be eligible for funding under the programme, a project should meet three sets of eligibility criteria:

- eligibility of applicants (see section 2.5.1),
- eligibility of activities (see section 2.5.2) and
- eligibility of expenditures (see section 2.5.3).

2.5.1 Eligibility of Applicants (Lead Partner and Partners)

👉 IMPORTANT

The project must include at least one partner from each side of the border region.

All partners are directly responsible for the project implementation and cannot act as an intermediary.

2.5.1.1 Criteria for Eligibility of Applicants (Lead Partner and Partners)

Lead Partner and its partners must comply with all of the following general eligibility criteria:

- **be legally established organizations (legal persons) according to the national legislation of the state on whose territory they are located;**

Exception is made for subsidiary structures of local/regional/national authorities. In case a structure of local/regional/national authority is not and cannot act as a legal entity, its legally established central organization, if such exists, shall be the project partner.

and

- **be registered in the programme area between Bulgaria and Türkiye;**

Exception is made for national/regional public authorities whose area of competence, established by legal acts, extends to the programme area, or structures of central public authorities located in the programme area which cannot be registered as legal entities – in this case the central authority is a project partner

and

- be non-profit making organizations;

and

- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action, not acting as an intermediary.

👉 IMPORTANT

All the above criteria must be fulfilled together.

For the present call the eligible Project Partners are as follows:

| Priority Axis/ Specific objective | Beneficiaries |
|--|--|
| Priority 2 “Integrated development of the cross-border region”, Specific objective “Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General Directorate Fire Safety and Civil Protection, Ministry of Interior, Bulgaria (DGFSCP); ○ Istanbul Regional Forestry Directorate within General Directorate of Forestry under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Türkiye (OGM). |

In addition to the listed above Project partners, up to two organizations may be invited by the Lead partner and up to two organizations - by Project partner 2 for project partners under the project. The eligible potential project partners which may be invited should have competences in the field of the project proposal.

🔔 IMPORTANT

All project partners should sign a “Project Partner Declaration” (Annex A2). They have to declare that they do not fall into any of the categories specified in the Declaration.

2.5.1.2 Lead Partner Principle

A “Lead Partner” (LP) among the project partners must be appointed prior to the submission of the project proposal. The Lead Partner, as the applicant of the project proposal, will be responsible for the preparation and submission of the project proposal as well as for implementation of the project. The LP must have the capacity to start the implementation of the project as quickly as possible, to maintain and further specify in detail the strategic character of the intervention, to exploit the immediate results of the intervention, and to concentrate all available managerial, financing and know-how resources and focus them on the project.

The lead partner shall carry out the following tasks:

- lay down the arrangements with other partners in an agreement comprising provisions that, inter alia, guarantee the sound financial management of the respective funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid;
- sign the contract for implementation of the operation with MA and further addenda to the contract (if any);
- assume responsibility for ensuring implementation of the entire operation;

- transfer the relevant budget amounts to the partners participating in the operation according to the Project Partnership Agreement and verified costs;
- ensure that expenditures presented by all partners has been paid in implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the partners;
- ensure that the expenditures presented by the partners participating in the operation have been verified by controller(s);
- collect and check the information from the project partners and submit reports on progress of the project to the JS;
- informing MA/JS about necessity of project modifications.

More information about the role and tasks of the Lead Partner is provided in the Subsidy contract – draft version (Annex C) and in the Project Partnership Agreement template (Annex A1).

IMPORTANT

A partner can never be a contractor and vice versa!

Please note that a “partner” involved in the project implementation as “Lead Partner” or “project partner” is excluded from any forms of contracting to other partners within the project.

2.5.1.3 Rules concerning partnership

IMPORTANT

The maximum number of partners in a project shall not exceed six (6) including the Lead Partner.

The project partners must have clear roles in project preparation and implementation.

All partners must sign the Project Partnership Agreement that stipulates their rights and duties. The signatures of the partners should be on the same page at the end of the agreement. The Project Partnership Agreement should be enclosed to the application form. A Project Partnership Agreement template is annexed to the present Guidelines (Annex A1). The partners may decide to add additional provisions to the Project Partnership Agreement.

IMPORTANT

Project Partnership Agreement is a legal and binding document which should be signed by all partners with utmost awareness. All partners should ensure to comply with the Project Partnership Agreement requirements.

IMPORTANT

Under the current call for proposals the Lead partner may submit maximum one project proposal.

2.5.2 Eligibility of Activities

2.5.2.1 Project duration and grant amount

The eligible grant amounts for the project is 5 176 470 EUR and maximum project duration is 36 months.

In addition, no grant may exceed 85% EU financing of the total eligible costs of the project (see also section 2.5.3). The remaining grant amount (15%) is financed from the national budgets of the partnering countries as national co-financing. Contributions from the partners' own resources are not obligatory. However the applicants may provide own co-financing which should be reflected in the project budget and it will be a subject of verification.

2.5.2.2 Activities' location

The implementation of project activities under Priority 2 will cover the entire Programme area employing the provisions of the integrated territorial development as stated in art. 28 (c) of the CPR Regulation.

👉 IMPORTANT

In accordance with Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments "When all or part of an operation is implemented outside the programme area inside or outside the Union, the selection of that operation shall require the explicit approval by the Managing Authority in the monitoring committee".

2.5.2.3 Eligible Activities

This is a Restricted Call aiming to support a project with a strong character, proving a significant impact on the eligible area. In this sense, the project has to demonstrate that:

- is based on a strong and balanced partnership on the two sides of the border, extended to a substantial part of the eligible territory and demonstrate significant impact on target groups;
- produce a long lasting effect. The project must provide added-value on activities already finished in the field or represent the beginning of activities that will be undertaken on a long term.

The types of activities financed under the present call for proposals are under Priority 2, Specific objective "Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas" (Strategic objective 2 "Development of better access to services of general interest" of the Territorial Strategy). The activities must demonstrate a clear cross-border effect to the eligible programme area. Programme requirements and project idea have to be aligned. The project needs to collaborate on cross border

activities that directly relate to addressing the priority and objective, as set out in the Programme, as well as the Strategic objective 2 of the Territorial Strategy.

This call aims at strengthening the capacity of the responsible institutions from both sides of the border for prevention and reaction to climate-related risks and more precisely the wildfires.

Description of the eligible type of activities under this call for proposal are given below. Please note that list of below activities is not exhaustive, however the proposed activities must guarantee the achievement of the targets of the ERDF indicators listed in p. 1.1.6 (RCO28 Area covered by protection measures against wildfires and RCR36 Population benefiting from wildfire protection measures), as well as the output indicators RCO84 and RCO116 and result indicator RCR104.

Eligible type activities:

- Conducting trainings in order to improve the readiness for joint actions to adapt to climate change and to prevent and mitigate the consequences of natural and man-made disasters (fires);
- Development of joint disaster response procedures and plans; setting unified standard operating procedures on interaction for fire and emergency response institutions;
- Delivery of specialised machinery/equipment/devices to improve the technical capabilities and enhance the physical capacity of the responsible institutions for prevention of climate related risks in the cross-border region.

IMPORTANT

Please consider the following requirements for all “investment” activities:

All works activities should be implemented on a municipal or state-owned property. The property should be:

- free of any encumbrances;
- not the object of a pending litigation;
- not the object of a claim according to the relevant national legislation.

The envisaged works activities have to be supported with approved/certified detailed technical or works designs (where applicable according to the relevant legislation of the country (Bulgaria or Türkiye), where the works activities will be implemented) and detailed bill of quantities. In case of construction works, for which the relevant legislation does not require approval of a technical or work designs, the applicant has to present a statement by the competent authority/institution(s) for exception of the rule for works design’s approval. During the application stage, the project partner/s should provide valid Building permit/s (if applicable).

In case of infrastructural activities, land acquisition has to be finalized and respective documents to be presented (if applicable).

All supplies have to be supported by detailed technical specifications, item unit prices and total price and at least three offers from different providers.

All prices have to be in Euro.

In case the project proposal includes investment activities, a positive environmental impact assessment (EIA) should be obtained, if required by national legislation.

In cases where an EIA is not required, the applicant must provide an official statement from the competent authority/institution(s) confirming the exception from the EAI requirement.

In case the project proposal includes investment activities, it should be supported by a document from the relevant authority confirming its compliance with the current River Basin Management Plans and Flood risk management plans (for Bulgarian partners) or by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Directorate General of Water Management (Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, Su Yönetimi Genel Müdürlüğü) confirming compliance with equivalent plans and documents (for Turkish partners).

2.5.3 Eligibility of Expenditures

2.5.3.1 General principles

The hierarchy of rules applicable to (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme projects is as follows²:

- European level - EU regulations;
- Programme level - specific rules decided for the (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme;
- National/regional level - rules applicable in Bulgaria and Türkiye, in accordance with respective national regulations and international commitments;
- Partner institutional level - internal rules applicable to each partner organization.

The partners should first consider EU regulations when budgeting/incurred expenditure. Where EU rules do not stipulate provisions, Programme rules apply. If neither the EU nor the Programme has a set rule, then national/regional legislation applies. Finally, the partner's internal rules should be followed if specific issues have not been covered by previous levels.

Only "eligible costs" can be taken into account for financial support. The budget is therefore both a cost estimate and a maximum ceiling for "eligible costs". Note that the eligible costs must be based on real costs supported by relevant documents with some exceptions for which the flat rates, unit costs and lump sum will be applied. The eligibility of expenditure applies to EU and national co-financing as well as beneficiaries' own contributions. The expenditures are generally eligible if they comply with the

² See in the part „Legal basis”

principles of sound financial management and with the relevant rules for public procurement stated in point 2.3.

To be eligible for financial support under the call for proposals, expenditures must:

- be necessary for carrying out the project and must comply with the principles of sound financial management, in particular value for money and cost-effectiveness;
- be essential for the achievement of the agreed activities and would not be incurred if the project is not carried out (additionality principle);
- have been stipulated in the project budget;
- have actually been incurred and paid by the Lead partner or its partners during the implementing period for the project and in accordance with the provisions stipulated in the subsidy contract (with the exception of flat rates, unit costs and lump sums);
- be registered in the project partner's accounts through a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code set in place specifically for the project (with the exception of flat rates, unit costs and lump sums);
- be verified as eligible by the controllers designated by the Managing Authority and the National Authority respectively;
- be in line with the provisions of the subsidy contract, European and national legislation, programme rules, including relevant procurement rules stated in point 2.3
- have not been subject to financing from any other public funds;
- comply with the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

2.5.3.2 Non-eligible costs

The list of non-eligible expenditure for the current call for proposal is as follows:

- Interest on debt;
- The purchase of land and existing buildings;
- Second hand equipment;
- Fines, financial penalties and expenditure on legal disputes and litigation;
- Costs of gifts;
- Costs related to fluctuation of foreign exchange rate.
- In-kind contributions (including unpaid voluntary work);
- Shared costs;
- Subcontracting between partners and/or associated partners of the same project for services, expertise, equipment and works carried out within the project;

- Charges for national financial transactions;
- Consultant fees between partners for services and work carried out within the project;
- Contracting of employees of the partner organizations as external experts, e.g. as freelancers;
- Other non-eligible expenditures according to EU and national legislation, Programme`s rules and Subsidy Contract.

2.5.3.3 Forms of reimbursement

In order to minimize the administrative burden and to concentrate the efforts in quality implementation of the project activities and achieving the objective and indicators Simplified Cost Options (SCO) could be used for reimbursement/budgeting of some of categories of expenditures. Using SCO means also that the human resources and administrative efforts involved in collecting documents and reporting expenditures can be focused more on the achievement of objectives instead of being concentrated on collecting and verifying financial documents. SCO which shall be used in the current call for proposal are:

- Flat rates – % of the defined base costs;
- Lump sums – amounts defined for certain activity;
- Unit Costs – maximum prices of certain goods, items, etc.

2.5.3.4 List and description of Eligible Expenditures per categories of costs

The following section provides an overview of the eligibility principles for the different cost categories:

- BC 1 Staff costs;
- BC 2 Office and administrative costs;
- BC 3 Travel and accommodation costs;
- BC 4 External expertise and services costs;
- BC 5 Equipment costs;
- BC 6 Costs for infrastructure and works;
- BC 7 Project preparation costs.

For each category of expenditures, a definition is provided as well as guidance for budgeting and reporting. Project partners are invited to review this information carefully when planning their budgets.

1. Staff costs

Staff costs include costs related to the organisation's own staff to be involved in project management (project team) and/or tasks related to the project content.

Staff costs must relate to activities which the partner organization would not carry out if the project was not undertaken.

The staff costs shall be limited to the following:

- Salary payments fixed in the employment document (contract, an appointment decision), or by law, relating to the responsibilities specified in the job description of the staff member concerned;
- Any other costs directly linked to the salary such as taxes and social security payments including pensions as long as they are fixed in the employment document or by law and they are in accordance with the legislation and standard practices in the country and/or organization and are not recoverable by the employer.

The appointment of the staff by the beneficiaries has to be made in accordance with the European and/or national legislation.

- Staff employed by the beneficiary for management of the project (project team)

The members of the project staff employed by the beneficiary for the management of the project for example are project manager, coordinator, accountant, assistant, and etc. The project team members perform periodically repetitive actions related to the organization, coordination, management and reporting of the activities, expenditures and results related to the project during the project period.

- Staff employed by the beneficiary for implementation of activities under the project content

The project staff employed by the beneficiary for implementation of activities under the project for example are experts which perform actions directly related to the project activities, requiring specific expertise which the project partner possesses.

It is the sole right and responsibility of the project partner to: determine the positions and persons needed for the proper functioning of the project team and needed for implementation of the project activities; conclude/establish the type of contract or any other legal relationship with the team members/staff for project activities and to implement changes in this regard during the project implementation.

At the beginning of the project implementation each beneficiary will be requested to present document (internal order, a letter, etc.) for nomination of the project team members, necessary for the successful implementation of the project activities.

Expenditures for external experts are eligible under BC 4.

Form of reimbursement:

Within the current call for proposal, each project partner might choose between two options for reimbursement of the project staff costs as follow:

Option 1

Flat rate up to 20 % of the total eligible costs under BC 4, BC 5 and BC 6 of that operation. The exact percentage of the flat rate should be indicated in the Application form (PART B, partner budget) by each project partner and will remain **unchanged** for the entire project implementation period.

In the verification process, the beneficiaries do not need to present supporting documents that the expenditures for staff have been incurred and paid. List of staff members working on the project and any other employment document shall be provided to the programme bodies on request. The project partner has to prove that project team have been established. The proper appointment of the project team and proper payments of salary and directly linked to the salary (taxes and social security payments etc.) in line with the respective legislation is on the responsibility of the beneficiaries themselves especially for audits conducted at national level.

Option 2

On the base of real costs incurred and paid by beneficiaries in connection with the implementation of the project and in accordance with the national legislation.

The beneficiaries, which choose this option, are obliged to submit all the supporting documents proving the expenditures during verification process – labor contracts, pay slips, administrative orders, bank orders, etc.

2. Office and administrative costs

Office and administrative costs cover expenditures related indirectly to the implementation of the project activities.

Office and administrative costs are limited to the following elements:

- a) office rent;
- b) insurance and taxes related to the buildings where the staff is located and to the equipment of the office (e.g. fire, theft insurances);
- c) utilities (e.g. electricity, heating, water);
- d) office supplies;
- e) accounting;
- f) archives;
- g) maintenance, cleaning and repairs;
- h) security;
- i) IT systems;
- j) communication (e.g. telephone, fax, internet, postal services, business cards);
- k) bank charges for opening and administering the account or accounts where the implementation of an operation requires a separate account to be opened;
- l) charges for transnational financial transactions.

Form of reimbursement:

Within the current call for proposal, each project partner might choose between two options for reimbursement of the project staff costs as follow:

Option 1

Flat rate up to 15 % of staff costs. The above list is exhaustive and all listed items are to be considered as covered by the flat rate and cannot be reported under any other budget line or category of costs. If no staff costs are foreseen and reported, no office and administrative costs can be charged.

Please note that the flat rate is directly linked to the staff costs and will always be calculated based on eligible staff costs.

No supporting documents need to be presented at the reporting stage.

Option 2

On the base of the real costs incurred and paid by beneficiaries in connection with the implementation of the project and in accordance with the national legislation.

The beneficiaries, which choose this option, are obliged to submit all the supporting documents proving the expenditures during verification process – invoices, receipts, bank orders, etc.

If the Turkish beneficiaries can not employ staff according to respective legislation and their own staff carry out the duties of project they should chose option 1. Otherwise they can not use 2nd budget line as it is rate of the staff cost.

3. Travel and accommodation costs

The category of expenditures covers travel and accommodation costs of project staff and shall be limited to the following cost elements:

- a) travel costs (e.g. tickets, travel and car insurance, fuel, car mileage, toll, and parking fees);
- b) the costs of meals;
- c) accommodation costs;
- d) visa costs;
- e) daily allowances.

Form of reimbursement:

Within the current call for proposal, each project partner might choose between two options for reimbursement of the project staff costs as follow:

Option 1

Flat rate up to 15 % of staff costs. The above list is exhaustive and all listed items are to be considered as covered by the flat rate and cannot be reported under any other budget line or category of costs. If no staff costs are foreseen and reported, no travel and accommodation costs can be charged.

Please note that the flat rate is directly linked to the staff costs and will always be calculated based on eligible staff costs.

No supporting documents need to be presented at the reporting stage.

Option 2

On the base of the real costs incurred and paid by beneficiaries in connection with the implementation of the project and in accordance with the national legislation. The beneficiaries, which choose this option, are obliged to provide all the supporting documents proving the expenditures during verification process – administrative orders, invoices, receipts, tickets, insurance policy, bank orders, etc.

If the Turkish beneficiaries can not employ staff according to respective legislation and their own staff carry out the duties of project they should chose option 1. Otherwise they can not use 2nd budget line as it is rate of the staff cost.

IMPORTANT

Partners cannot report costs covered by the flat rates in BC 1, BC 2 and BC 3 in any other cost category.

4. External expertise and services costs

External expertise

External expertise costs correspond to external expertise, provided by a public or private law body or a natural person other than the beneficiaries of the project, which is strictly linked to the project and be essential for its effective implementation. Project Partners and their employees shall not be contracted by another project partner within the same project as an external expert or a subcontractor. Public procurement rules stated in point 2.3 must be respected in selection of the service providers. All costs must comply with other applicable EU and programme information and publicity rules. The costs of external expertise shall be paid on the basis of contracts or written agreements of equivalent value, supported by tangible and documented invoices or claims issued by the providers of goods/services.

Eligible expenditure under this category shall be limited to the following:

- Studies or surveys (e.g. evaluations, strategies, concept notes, design plans, handbooks);
- Translations;
- Development, modifications and updates to IT systems and website;
- Promotion, communication, publicity, promotional items and activities or information related to the project;
- Intellectual property rights;

- Expenditures for external experts, lecturers, trainers, moderators, interpreters;
- Travel and accommodation for external experts, lecturers, trainers, moderators, interpreters, chairpersons of meetings and service providers;
- Other specific expertise and services needed for the project.

IMPORTANT

All unit rates must be according to the market prices at the time of submission of the project proposal.

Form of reimbursement:

Costs related to external expertise shall be reimbursed by the Programme on the basis of real costs and supporting documents proving the expenditures need to be presented at the verification stage.

Services costs (costs for event organisation):

Services costs shall be limited to the followings:

- Expenses for rent of hall for meetings, trainings, conferences, etc.;
- Expenses for rent of equipment - translation equipment, audio equipment, etc.;
- The expenditure for rent of vehicle for participants in the events (car, van, minibus, bus, etc.);
- Expenses for coffee breaks, refreshments, lunches and dinners for participants in the events;
- Accommodation costs;
- Expenses for purchase of consumables and materials for the participants in the events - paper, files, folders, cases, CDs etc. and printing of invitations, agenda, presentations.

Form of reimbursement:

Within the current call for proposal, the project partners might choose between two options for reimbursement of the project costs for services for organisation of events as follow:

Option 1

As unit costs, defined according to the duration of the event and number of participants:

14,00 EURO per participant in one day events; 60,00 EURO per day per participant in multi-day events.

Example for calculation:

* Example for calculation of the amount for 1 day event per 20 participants:

1 day * 20 participants = 20 units

20 units * unit costs EUR 14,00 = total costs EUR 280,00

* Example for calculation of the amount for 2 days event per 20 participants:

2 days * 20 participants = 40 units

40 units * unit costs EUR 60 = total costs EUR 2 400,00

The event unit cost per participant cannot be claimed for:

- an event consisting of only evening programme with a dinner or similar get-together;
- an evening programme with a dinner or similar get-together which is followed by an actual event on the next day;
- working meetings with contracted external experts when meeting only with a partner organisation, for example external project management, book-keeping, content expert;
- working meetings with programme bodies (Managing Authority, National Authority, Joint Secretariat), when meeting only with a partner organization;

Supporting documents proving successfully implementation of the event, achieving the outputs, number of participants, etc. must be available for control purpose at the verification stage.

IMPORTANT

Partners cannot report costs covered by the unit cost in any other cost category.

Option 2

On the base of the real costs incurred and paid by beneficiaries in connection with the implementation of the project and in accordance with the national legislation.

The beneficiaries, which choose this option, are obliged to submit all the supporting documents proving the expenditures during verification process – contracts, protocols, invoices, receipts, bank orders, etc.

IMPORTANT

All unit rates must be according to the market prices at the time of submission of the project proposals.

Public procurement rules, described in point 2.3, should be respected.

5. Equipment costs

Expenditures for equipment includes costs on equipment purchased, rented, or leased by a partner and which is necessary for achieving the project's objectives.

Equipment costs is limited to the following items:

- office equipment;
- IT hardware and software;
- furniture and fittings;
- laboratory equipment;
- machines and instruments;
- tools or devices;
- vehicles;
- other specific equipment needed for operations.

Equipment should be clearly and strictly linked to the project and exclusively used for the project implementation.

Equipment must be purchased in compliance with public procurement rules, described in point 2.3.

Depreciation costs - for equipment that will not be used by the project partners or the project target group after the project completion and if the economic lifetime of the equipment (respectively – the period of depreciation) is longer than the project duration, only the depreciation costs for the period of project duration are eligible. The depreciation rate has to be in line with national rules. Depreciation is charged proportionally for each relevant period for which a periodical report is required and prepared. The full value of depreciated costs on equipment in relation to the total project duration cannot be charged as total amount for one particular period. Only the proportionate sum of the depreciations costs according to the use of equipment for the project is eligible. The amount (percentage used and time duration) has to be properly clarified (auditable). The depreciation costs of equipment can never exceed the purchase price of the equipment.

IMPORTANT

The expenditures for equipment rented or leased have being considered as eligible only when the beneficiary submits to the MA supporting documents proving that the rental/leasing costs have being occurred in the period of project implementation.

Form of reimbursement:

Costs related to this budget category shall be reimbursed by the Programme on the basis of real costs and supporting documents proving the expenditures need to be presented at the verification stage.

6. Costs for infrastructure and works

The costs in this category relate to the investment in infrastructure and works, necessary to achieve the objectives of the project.

The expenditures for infrastructure and works shall be limited to the following elements:

- building permits;
- building material;
- labour;
- specialised interventions (such as soil remediation, mine-clearing);
- works;
- supervision of works;
- authors supervision.

IMPORTANT

Costs of purchase of land and buildings are not eligible

Form of reimbursement:

Costs related to this budget category shall be reimbursed by the Programme on the basis of real costs and supporting documents proving the expenditures need to be presented at the verification stage.

7. Project Preparation costs

Preparation costs shall be limited to the following:

- consultancy, elaboration of technical documentation (incl. feasibility studies, detailed design, technical drawings, etc.);
- elaboration of project proposal and application form, translation of documents, taxes and other charges;
- other costs necessary to submit a valid application form.

Form of reimbursement: Project approved for financing by the Monitoring Committee and have concluded Subsidy contract with the Managing Authority is entitled to receive the reimbursement of the preparation costs in a form of a lump sum of **EUR 12 000**.

IMPORTANT

The amount planned for project preparation shall be included in the Lead partner's budget at the application stage!

With the first project report, the lump sum for preparation costs have to be added to the Lead partner's reported expenditure, and shall be verified and reimbursed to the Lead partner. The lump sum for preparation costs must be allocated to the Lead partner's budget. Nevertheless, to reflect the partners' involvement in the preparation of the application form in a fair and transparent way the partnership should share the preparation costs. The details of how preparation costs will be shared need to be included in the Project Partnership Agreement.

📢 IMPORTANT

The activities which have already been covered by any other EU funds are not eligible.

The currency to be used to fill the budget tables is EUR.

2.5.3.5 Currency exchange at the verification stage

Expenditure incurred by project partners in a currency other than the EUR shall be converted into Euro by using the monthly accounting rate of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm) in the month during which expenditure was submitted for verification.

2.5.3.6 Eligible expenditures for VAT

Each project partner must take into consideration the respective national VAT legislation.

For Bulgarian partners:

The expenditures for VAT is eligible for operation where the VAT is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation. In the implementation phase of the project the project partners should be requested to provide the necessary documentation proving the VAT requested for reimbursement is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation.

For partners from Türkiye:

In accordance with Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 Article 64 (1) (c) i, VAT is eligible for projects the total cost of which is below EUR 5,000,000 (including VAT).

For the projects whose budget is above 5.000.000 VAT is ineligible cost. Therefore they shall make all the project expenditures VAT excluded. They should submit their request for payment documents VAT excluded. VAT Exemption Certificate shall be provided to beneficiaries according to respective national procedures. The detailed information about the different type of tax payments incurred during the project implementation process may be found on General Communication on Türkiye-European Union Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) Framework Agreement of Ministry of Treasury and Finance of Türkiye.

3 Annexes

IMPORTANT

All Annexes (A) and Supporting Documents (B) must be presented in scanned version (or signed with qualified electronic signatures) together with the filled Application Form in the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS) of the Programme.

Each document from the lists below must be signed and dated (or dated and signed with qualified electronic signature) according to the requirements, and then scanned (or presented) and titled as a separate file.

In case of signed with electronic signature documents, the qualified electronic signature should be issued to the legal representative of the respective project partner as such and not as individuals.

In case the project proposal is selected for contracting, the Managing Authority shall request from the Applicant to present the online submitted documents in original paper version as well. Failure to do so on the part of the Applicant, or in case discrepancies are found between the scanned and paper versions of the documents, shall result in decline of signature of Subsidy contract.

Regardless of the above, throughout the whole screening process the Managing Authority reserves its right to ask the Applicant to submit the already presented scanned documents in hard copies as well, in order to verify their correctness.

3.1 Annexes (A)

The following Annexes should be filled in according to the template and submitted together with the Application form:

A1. Project Partnership Agreement – signed and dated by all partners

A2. Partnership and Co-financing Statement – signed, dated and provided by each partner

A3. Project Partner Declaration – signed, dated and provided by each partner

A4. Declaration of e-mail address of the Lead Partner – signed and dated by the Lead partner

IMPORTANT

All the annexes may be signed electronically with qualified electronic signatures. In case the Annexes are signed with qualified electronic signatures, it should be dated.

In case of signed with electronic signature Annexes, the qualified electronic signature should be issued to the legal representative of the respective project partner as such and not as individuals.

IMPORTANT

Please note that the e-mail address, provided by the Lead partner in Annex A4, shall be used by the

Programme bodies as the only official communication channel with the Applicant during the entire screening process (including pre-contracting process) in terms of requests for additional clarifications, notification for selection results, etc.

The e-mail address should be functional and must be regularly used and checked by the Lead partner, as the Managing Authority shall bear NO responsibility in cases when the Applicant does not respond to a clarification request within the set deadline or fails to meet other deadlines!

Furthermore, any requests for clarifications and notifications shall be deemed to have been received on the date upon which the Managing Authority has sent them to the Lead partner at the e-mail address.

3.2 Supporting Documents (B)

The following Supporting documents should be provided and submitted together with the Application form:

B1. Document indicating legal status: Documentary and other evidence (issued in the original language and English translation, signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) on the most recent legal status of Turkish partners (issued not later than 6 months prior to the submission deadline of the current call). In the cases when the applicable document does not show the legal representative of the organization, additional document should be provided (the act of appointment/nomination, decision of municipal election commission, etc.) showing clearly the name of the person with representative authority.

The document on the recent legal status should indicate also the date of establishment of the organization, the place of establishment (registration) and scope of territory competence (if applicable), and it should prove the eligibility of the organization in accordance to all criteria stated above in section 2.5.1. In case the issued document does not justify all of the above circumstances, other documents could be provided, like the act of establishment or certificates from superior authorities (Ministries, Agencies, District governments, Inspectorates).

B2. Decision of Local Council/ Board of Directors/ any similar body or managing person (for each project partner) regarding the project development, implementation and ensuring the sustainability of the project results for five years after completion of the implementation period – issued in the original language and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy**. This decision will indicate the legal representative of the partner.

Decision for project development, implementation and ensuring the sustainability of the project results has to be provided in all cases, no matter whether sole or collective managing authority takes the decisions in the organization.

In the cases where the executive authority is different from the collective managing body, the decision

has to be taken by the second one.

IMPORTANT

The Bulgarian partners that are second-level budget administrators should present a Letter of Support for implementation of the project issued by the respective first level administrator. The letter should clearly state the support of the first level administrator for project development, implementation and ensuring the sustainability of the project results for five years after completion of the implementation period.

B3. Legalized mandates of delegation from the legal representatives of partners (in case the application form and/or annexed declarations and/or partnership agreement are not signed by the legal representatives of the Lead Partner/partners) – **issued in the original language** and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy**.

In case the signatures are of a deputy by rights, the act certifying the substitution by rights has to be presented together with the act for nomination of the person at the position of a deputy. When giving a mandate of delegation the legal representative has to present evidences that his/her rights for delegation are not limited by any means.

B4. Justification for expenditures planned as a total amount under Budget category 4. Each project partner should provide justification for calculation of the amount in English, signed by the legal representative or the authorized person (Supporting document B4). This justification should contain at least:

- detailed description of the proposed activity;
- calculation of the envisaged experts' input, including number and type of experts needed, days/months of involvement and remuneration unit rate;
- detailed description of the expected outcomes from the activity, including information about any printed materials (type, number of copies, number of pages) and calculation of the price;
- any other additional information the applicant may find appropriate for justification of the proposed cost.

IMPORTANT

In addition to all annexes (A1-A4) and supporting documents (B1-B4), the following supporting documents must be presented for the investment activities:

B5. Supporting documents concerning INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES ONLY

B5.1. All investment activities have to be performed on **municipal or state-owned** property:

- Ownership act or certificate (or other legal document according to national legislation) for municipal or state ownership of the tangible assets, which will be subject of works activities together with recent outline/design of the property – issued in the original language and English

translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy.** In the case the project envisages the purchase of supplies, which need to be permanently installed, it is necessary to submit an ownership act for municipal or state-owned property as well;

- Consent of the owner (Decision of the Council, Board, etc.), clearly stating that the assets are given for free right of use for the purpose of the project at least for 5 years after end of the project – issued in the original language and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy.**

The consent should be signed by the person/body with the decision-taking authority (e.g. the Municipal Council, not the Mayor).

Consent of the owner is necessary in all cases even when the partner is the owner of the assets. In case the assets are owned by a partner the consent can be given in the same act (document) as the one containing the Decision for project development and implementation described for supporting document B2.

In the case of permanent installation of supplies or equipment on municipal or state-owned property (immovable supply/ equipment items like outdoor equipment, kiosks, permanent video walls etc.), consent of the owner clearly stating that the assets are given for free right of use for the purpose of the project at least for 5 years after the end of the project should be presented as well.

B5.2. In case of investment activities requiring passing through private territories the consent of the owners must be obtained and presented in a due legal form together with a copy of the ownership act – issued in the original language and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy.**

B5.3. In case of investment activities within territories/objects with special status (National parks, environmental and architectural reserves, cultural monuments, protected areas, areas included in Nature 2000 etc.) relevant documentation (permits, approvals, certificates, statements, etc.) required by the respective national applicable law - issued in the original language and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy.**

B5.4. Copy of letter issued by the relevant body clearly stated that Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary - issued in the original language and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy.**

- **OR**

Copy of positive Environmental Impact Assessment (positive opinion from the relevant body), required by the national legislation - issued in the original language and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy.**

B5.5. Copy of letter issued by the relevant body clearly stating that the project proposal is eligible according to the current River Basin Management Plans and Flood risk management plans (issued in original language and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic**

signature by respective organization as true copy) – for Bulgarian partners and documents of equivalent meaning from Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Directorate General of Water Management (Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığı, Su Yönetimi Genel Müdürlüğü) **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) - for Turkish partners.**

B5.6. Explanatory note (in free format) for the envisaged prevention measures for avoiding pollution of water bodies in emergency situations by respective organization (issued in English, **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization) – if applicable.**

B5.7. Approved Detailed Technical or Works Design (if applicable according to the relevant legislation), issued in the original language and English translation **signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy.** English translation should be provided at least of the Explanatory Notes of each of the project design parts, Bill of Quantities, Cover sheets of drawings and any other parts of the investment project designs that the applicant thinks might contribute to better assessment.

A) In case of investment activities which according to national legislation **require approval** of works design applicants should present:

- Approved Detailed Technical or Works Design;

For Bulgarian partners

The works designs (in the means of Chapter 8, section 1 from Bulgarian Spatial Law) should be elaborated according to Ordinance 4/21.05.2001 for the volume and the content of investment projects. The works design should be approved by the competent authority, which should be certified with the seal of the authority placed on the project designs.

For Bulgarian partners the authority responsible for the approval of the project designs is defined in article 145 (1) from Bulgarian Spatial Law.

For Turkish partners

The works designs must be elaborated taking into consideration all related national legislation. They should be elaborated particularly in the means of Law for Public Works No. 3194 (3194 sayılı İmar Kanunu), all related regulations for Public Works (ilgili İmar Yönetmelikleri), Regulation on Public Works for Planned Areas and Regulation (Planlı Alanlar Yönetmeliği) on Public Works for Unplanned Areas (Plansız Alanlar İmar Yönetmeliği) for the content of investment projects. In addition to these general legislations, there are a number of laws and legislations related to specific topics on construction and planning. A list of legislations can be found from the Construction Guide of the NA (<https://cbc.ab.gov.tr/sinirotesi/50676/sinir-otesi-isbirligi-programlari-insaat-rehberi?lang=tr> - applicants submitting projects may only use this guide for guidance and they should comply with all related legislation in force on the date.). This list is not exhaustive and the beneficiaries are responsible for conforming with the legislation specific for their type of design and region as well as with the general legislation. The works designs should be approved by the relevant competent authority, which

should be certified with the seal of the authority placed on the project designs. According to Turkish legislation, work designs should be approved by the related department in the municipality or the local government (by the architect/engineer/technical staff, by their supervisor and the head of department for construction or development).

IMPORTANT

Please note that only mayor's signature is not a proper approval of work designs according to Turkish legislation.

- Explanatory note as part of the works designs;
- Bill of Quantities with prices (referred to here and afterwards as Bill of quantities) including all parts of the investment project designs;

The Bill of Quantities should be presented in the form of a table with indicated type of all the construction works with unit, estimated quantity, unit price, amount of the type of the construction works, total amount of the Bill of the Quantities. Where possible the Bill of Quantities should be supported with a breakdown per investment sites or per parts of the project designs (e.g. Construction, Landscaping, Electricity, Water supply, etc.). Calculations for the unit prices of the types of construction/repair works may also be presented.

The Bill of Quantities may be presented in the local currency of the project partner. In this case the table of the Bill of Quantities should mandatory include a column with the unit price in EUR for each type of construction works and a column for the amount in EUR of that type of construction works.

The Turkish partners should convert the local currency into EUR using the monthly exchange rate of the European Commission for the month of the submission of the project proposal.

B) In case of investment activities which according to national legislation **do not require approval** of works designs Applicants should present:

- Scheme/plan of the object/s of intervention;
- Explanatory note, describing the envisaged construction works;
- Bill of Quantities (as described under point A) above);
- Statement by the competent authority, confirming the exception of the rule for works design's approval.

B5.8. Valid Construction permit for each partner envisaging construction works (if applicable according to the relevant legislation) (issued in original language and English translation **signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy** or a statement from the competent authority confirming that a construction permit is not required.

IMPORTANT

For Bulgarian partners the investment activities which do not require approval of works designs are defined in Article 147 (1) of the Bulgarian Spatial Law.

IMPORTANT

Turkish partners may benefit from the “Construction Guide” (<https://cbc.ab.gov.tr/sinirotesi/50676/sinir-otesi-isbirligi-programlari-insaat-rehberi?lang=tr>) which has advisory characteristics during the preparation of the work designs (drawings, site plans, permits, approvals and other documents related to investment activities).

B5.9 In case of Supply of equipment the applicants should present:

- **Technical specifications for supplies** (in English, signed/signed with qualified electronic signatures by the respective partner) – the detailed specifications should be clear enough for determination of the seeking deliverables (if applicable);
- **Market analysis** for the planned supply. The recommended approach for conducting this analysis is the respective project partner to provide a minimum of three extracts from national public procurements systems of a similar supply with identical technical specifications. In instances where evidence from a national procurement system is unattainable (verifiable circumstances apply), the respective project partner is required to present soliciting offers from at least three independent providers. These offers should be comparable in terms of requested technical characteristics, and as such, they must be accompanied by a uniform request for offer. Expenditures included in the project budget derived from the market analysis should reflect an average of the price offers received or an average of the extracts from national public procurement systems. In the event that the latter documentation is dated beyond two years, project supply costs may be adjusted for inflation using the most recent available official national data. In order to overcome the impact of future inflation and price instability, the expenditures included in the budget based on the above market analysis could be increased with the average of the national inflation of the last 3 years before the application submission, but not more than 10%.

When highly specialized equipment has to be procured (with insufficient evidence in national procurement systems) from a limited pool of suppliers, and conducting market research for the equipment cost is not feasible, historical data for concluded contracts from previous similar deliveries must be provided by applicants.

Required documents should be provided in the original language and English translation **signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature** by respective organization as true copy.

👉 IMPORTANT

Please note that the Technical specifications for supplies must not indicate any trademarks and models!

Any other documents/permissions/authorizations/etc. concerning the project should be provided as Annexes.

👉 IMPORTANT

In addition project partners may present separate documents with justification of expenditures planned in the budget for implementation of different activities. These documents will be taken into account during the screening, budget optimization and projects' content modifications procedures and pre-contracting.

👉 IMPORTANT

Supporting documents must be supplied also in English translation (signed by respective organization as true copy or signed with qualified electronic signature by the legal representative of the respective organization) or at least the relevant parts of these documents, proving the partners' eligibility must be translated in English. The translated version will prevail for the purposes of evaluation of the application.

3.3 Documents for information (C)

The following documents are provided for information only:

Annex C - Subsidy contract - draft version (for information purposes only).

👉 IMPORTANT

The Screening Working Group may request additional documents or corrections at any stage of the screening process.

4 How to get the Applicants' Package and Submit the Application

Prior to preparation of the project proposal and electronic filling of the Application Form in JEMS, the potential applicant must carefully review the content of the Application Package, available on the following websites:

- Programme website: <https://ipa-bgtr.mrrb.bg/>
- MA website: www.mrrb.bg

- NA website: <http://www.ab.gov.tr>
- NA CBC website: <http://cbc.ab.gov.tr/>
- EU Structural Funds in Bulgaria website: www.eufunds.bg

The applicant may submit questions of substance in writing up to 14 calendar days before the deadline for submission of proposal. The JS will reply no later than 7 calendar days before the deadline for the submission of the proposal.

Questions may be sent by e-mail to the address listed below, indicating clearly the reference of the Call for Proposal - No 2021TC16IPCB005 – 2025 – 5:

E-mail: JShaskovo@mrrb.government.bg

IMPORTANT

Please complete all sections of the Application Form in JEMS and its Annexes carefully and as clearly as possible in order for your Application to be assessed properly.

IMPORTANT

The project proposal must be submitted entirely in electronic form using the JEMS.

Detailed instructions for access to the electronic system and submission of project proposal are provided in Attachment 1 "Application form" to these Guidelines for Applicant.

In case of signing of documents with detached electronic signature, the files should be uploaded in the JEMS as single archived document.

The Annexes must be submitted using the forms included in the Application Package. Modifying the standard Annexes will result in the rejection of the Application.

The Application Form must be filled in English. The Supporting documents issued by national/ local authorities or other bodies shall be attached in the original language accompanied by a translation into English (as described in Section 3.2).

The documents issued by public authorities or other bodies should be scanned (when are issued on paper) or presented signed with qualified electronic signature of the respective authority/other bodies issued the document (in case are signed with electronic signature). The documents for the project partners should be uploaded in JEMS, section Application annexes, in respective section for each project partner. The documents related to investments, described in Work packages, should be uploaded to the respective number of investment in section Application annexes, Investment documentation.

5 Deadline for Receipt of Applications

IMPORTANT

The deadline for submission of the Project proposal in JEMS system is 2025, 17:00 h Bulgarian local time.

The application registered **after the deadline** will automatically **be rejected**.

6 Application screening process

The project screening criteria are approved by the Monitoring Committee (MC). The screening of the project proposal is performed by Screening Working Group (SWG), consisting of Chairperson, Secretary and voting members who are representatives of the Managing Authority, the National Authority and the Joint Secretariat, and consists of:

- Administrative compliance and eligibility screening – performed by the SWG;
- Quality screening and pre-contracting (check for double financing, check for compliance with the state aid rules, on-the-spot visit, budget optimization and projects' content modifications) – performed by the SWG.

Simultaneously with the screening process, a procedure for selection of the submitted project proposal by the Strategy Board (SB) is performed (on meeting or via written procedure). The members of the SB will get familiar with the project proposal and should reach a unified decision if the proposal is contributing to Strategic Objective 2 of the Territorial strategy. In case there is no consensus, the decision is taken by simple majority, whereby voting members from each country cast autonomous votes. A simple majority (more than 50% of the votes of voting members present at the meeting) determines the decision for each country, and the vote calculation is conducted on a 'one country, one vote' basis. In case of a written procedure, the members who do not provide a reply within the set deadline are deemed to have voted "For" the project proposal. Meeting/written procedure of the SB concludes with a Decision of the SB for project contribution with TS strategic objective 2. The Decision is attached to the Screening report which SWG present for approval to the Head of MA and Monitoring Committee for grant decision.

The results of the screening process, together with decision of the SB, will be summarized in the form of report by the SWG and presented to the MC for approval.

The Lead partner will be informed with an official letter, signed by the MA on behalf of MC, about the decision of the MC on the approval/rejection of the project.

Potential applicant may find below the project screening criteria.

Before the screening of the project proposal begins, a preparatory meeting of the SWG is organized. The purpose of the meeting is that all members of the SWG get familiar with the Guidelines for Applicant and Application Package, as well as the rules to be observed during the entire screening process.

At the conclusion of the preparatory meeting the Chairperson of the SWG verifies the electronic submission of project proposal through the JEMS.

Only the proposal having met the submission deadline is subject to screening.

The administrative compliance and eligibility screening will be carried out by voting members of the SWG under the supervision of the Chairperson. The proposal will be examined by representatives of each country, filling in "Yes" or "No" answer in the administrative compliance and eligibility check part of the grid, as published below.

If the project proposal has received "No" on a specific criterion/a, the SWG could request additional documentation or corrections of the already submitted documents or project proposal.

The Screening Working Group may request submission of additional documents / corrections of already submitted proposal / certified translation in English of any Supporting Document (in case the presented translation is considered as not convincing) during entire evaluation process.

All requests for additional documentation/corrections shall be sent to the email address, provided by the Lead partner in Annex A4, which shall be used as the only official communication channel with the Applicant during the entire screening process, and will contain clear instruction concerning the deadline for submission of the information and any other instruction if necessary. The deadline for submission of the information by the Applicant will to be defined, depending on the type of the requested information/correction/supporting document/s but shall be not less than 5 working days. The Managing Authority shall bear NO responsibility in cases when the Applicant does not respond to a clarification request within the set deadline. Furthermore, any requests for clarifications and notifications shall be deemed to have been received on the date upon which the Managing Authority has sent them to the Lead partner at the e-mail address, provided in Annex A4.

The aim of the quality screening is the project proposal to be checked in relation to the set objectives and priorities, and ensures that the selected operation comply with the specific objective and which will guarantee the visibility of the Community funding.

The quality screening of the project proposal is carried out taking into account the submitted project proposal, annexes and supporting documents, including the additionally requested documents and corrections.

The quality part of the screening process will be performed on the basis of specific selection criteria, grouped in four general sections in the quality grid, as published below:

- Section 1: Partnership Relevance – the screening should check the ability of the project partners to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably. The project partners should be capable of ensuring quality of the final product or service, and efficient, transparent allocation of resources;
- Section 2: Project Relevance and Cooperation Character – the screening should check whether the project has clearly contributing to priority 2, specific objective, 2.1 , and whether the content of the proposal properly fits the selected priority and specific objective or not. The screening should also verify the coherence of the project with wider strategies and its value added, providing coherence with the following horizontal principles: sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women. The screening should also check the cross-border impact of the project and if the output and result indicators are quantified and relevant;
- Section 3: Project Intervention Logic – the proposed project work packages should be assessed

according to their logic consistency objectives-outputs. The screening should verify if the activities of the work packages are realistic, well defined and justified and if the project outputs and results are realistic and contribute to programme indicators. The project should have clear and justified potential for durability and transferability of the project results;

- Section 4: Operational Screening – the screening should check the envisaged project time plan, the proposed activities and deliverables – if they are relevant and lead to planned outputs and results, as well as distribution of tasks among partners. The screening should verify if the communication and visibility activities are appropriate and efficient, if the project budget is realistic, logically planned and is in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The proposal shall be checked by two different assessors representatives of MA, NA or JS (one from each participating country)/external assessors working separately and producing their own independent screening for each question, in accordance with the provided grid. The project proposal will receive for each sub criterion included in the core selection criteria a “Yes” and “No” answer and comments. The assessors have to justify their screening with clear, objective and relevant comments for each section under the supervision of the Chairperson.

The assessors will also make final conclusion/recommendation on the application, which will consist of a short critical analysis of the proposal, followed by a list of the main strong and weak points for each section of the grid.

In case the proposal does not fulfill some criteria, the proposal will be returned for modification and/or additional clarification and a deadline for its re-submission will be set.

In order to be funded the project should fulfill all the conditions mentioned in the screening sheet.

PART ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY SCREENING

| ADMINISTRATIVE PART (to be filled by Screening Working Group member) | |
|---|--|
| Project No | |
| Lead Partner | |
| Partner/s | |
| Project title | |

| No | CRITERIA FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLIANCE | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
|-----------|---|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1. | The Application Form is duly completed. | | | |
| 2. | All sections of the Application Form are typed in English. | | | |
| 3. | Project Partnership Agreement signed and dated/signed with qualified electronic signatures by all partners is provided (Annex A1). | | | |
| 4. | Partnership and co-financing statement is provided by each partner – signed and dated for pdf/dated and signed with qualified electronic signatures (Annex A2). | | | |
| 5. | Project partner declaration is provided by each partner – signed and | | | |

| | dated for pdf/ dated and signed with qualified electronic signature (Annex A3). | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|--|
| 6. | Declaration of the e-mail address of the Lead partner is provided – signed and dated in pdf/dated and signed with qualified electronic signature (Annex A4) | | | |
| No | SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS | YES | NO | |
| 7. | <p>Documentary and other evidence (issued in original language and English translation signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) on the most recent legal status of Turkish partners is provided (issued not later than 6 months prior the date of application). It contains all the attributes described in section 3.2 of the Guidelines for Applicants.</p> <p>In case of Subsidiary structure(s) of local/regional/national authorities situated in the programme area acting as partner(s) – the respective act with assignment of the functioning of the unit in the definite territory is attached.</p> | | | |
| 8. | <p>Decision of the managing authority of each project partner: Local Council /Board of Directors / any similar body or managing person regarding the project development, implementation and ensuring the sustainability of the project results for five years after completion of the implementation period is provided (issued in original language and English translation signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy).</p> <p>Letter of Support for implementation of the project, issued by the respective first level administrator is provided for the Bulgarian partners that are second-level budget administrators. The letter clearly stating the support of the first level administrator for project development, implementation and ensuring the sustainability of the project results for five years after completion of the implementation period.</p> | | | |
| 9. | Legalized mandates of delegation from the legal representatives of partners (in case the application form and/or annexed declarations and/or partnership agreement are not signed by the legal representatives of the Lead Partner/partners) – issued in original language and English translation is/are presented | | | |
| 10. | Justification for expenditures planned as a total amount – provided by each partner with expenditures planned as total amount under Budget category 4 “External expertise and services costs” (in English, signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy). | | | |
| 11. | All investment activities will be performed on municipal or state-owned property | | | |
| 12. | Ownership act or certificate for municipal or state-owned property of the tangible assets, which will be subject of works activities (issued in original language and English translation signed by respective organization as true copy), together with recent outline/design of the | | | |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|--|--|--|
| | property (certified by the partner that is a true copy) | | | |
| 13. | In the case the project envisages the purchase of supplies which need to be permanently installed - an ownership act on municipal or state-owned property (issued in original language and English translation signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy). | | | |
| 14. | <p>Consent of the owner clearly stating that the assets are given for free right of use for the purpose of the project at least for 5 years after end of the project (issued in original language and English translation signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy). The consent should be signed by the person/body with the decision-making authority (e.g. the Municipal Council, not the Mayor).</p> <p>In the case of permanent installation of supplies or equipment on municipal or state-owned property (immovable supply/ equipment items like outdoor equipment, etc.) - consent of the owner clearly stating that the assets are given for free right of use for the purpose of the project at least for 5 years after end of the project is presented.</p> | | | |
| 15. | In case of investment activities required passing through private territories the consent of the owners is obtained and presented in a due legal form and copy of the ownership act (issued in original language and English translation signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy). | | | |
| 16. | In case of investment activities within territories/objects with special status (National parks, environmental and architectural reserves, cultural monuments, protected areas, areas included in Nature 2000 etc.) relevant documentation (permits, approvals, certificates, statements, etc.) required by the respective national applicable law is/are presented (issued in original language and English translation signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy). | | | |
| 17. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of letter issued by the relevant body clearly stating that Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary (issued in original language and English translation signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) • or <p>Copy of positive Environmental Impact Assessment (positive opinion from the relevant body), required by the national legislation (issued in original language and English translation signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) is presented.</p> | | | |
| 18. | <p>For Bulgarian project partners</p> <p>Copy of letter issued by the relevant body clearly stating that the project proposal is eligible according to the current River Basin Management Plans and Flood risk management plans (issued in</p> | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| | <p>original language and English translation signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy).</p> <p>For Turkish partners</p> <p>Documents of equivalent meaning from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Directorate General of Water Management (issued in original language and English translation signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy).</p> | | | |
| 19. | <p>Explanatory note for the envisaged prevention measures for avoiding pollution of water bodies in emergency situations by respective organization (issued in English, signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization) is presented – if applicable.</p> | | | |
| 20. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved detailed technical or works design (if applicable according to the relevant legislation), or Statement by the competent authority, which declares that the envisaged construction works do not require approval of works designs (issued in original language and English translation signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy). • Explanatory note as a part of the works designs is presented (issued in original language and English translation signed/ signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy). • Bill of quantities and prices for the works and supplies are presented and they contain all the attributes required in the Guidelines for Applicants (issued in original language and English translation signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy). • Valid Construction permit for each partner envisaging construction works (if applicable according to the relevant legislation), issued in original language and English translation signed/signed with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy or a statement from the competent authority that a construction permit is not required. | | | |
| 21. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed technical specifications for supplies with unit and total prices in Euro is presented (technical specification is not required for equipment, which will be used for management of the project). • Market analysis for the planned supply is presented (according to the requirements outlined in supporting document B5.9). | | | |
| CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY COMPLIANCE | | | | |
| 22. | <p>All partners meet eligibility criteria defined in Section 2.5.1 of the Guidelines for Applicants.</p> | | | |
| 23. | <p>At least one partner from each side of the cross-border region is involved.</p> | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| 24. | The implementation period does not exceed the maximum project duration indicated in the Guidelines for Applicant (AF Part A, section A.1). | | | |
| 25. | At least 3 of the cooperation criteria are clearly fulfilled (mandatory cooperation in joint development and implementation of the project + one by choice from join staffing or financing) (AF Part C, section C.7.5). | | | |
| 26. | The value of the financial support requested is in line with the limit indicated in Guidelines for Applicants. (AF Part A, section A.4) | | | |
| 27. | The maximum amount for Project preparation costs is observed (12 000 EUR). | | | |
| COMMENTS | | YES | NO | |
| Project proposal satisfies all criteria for administrative and eligibility compliance | | | | |
| Assessor's name: | | Assessor's signature: | | Date of evaluation: |

PART QUALITY SCREENING

| QUALITY SCREENING PART (to be filled by Screening Working Group member) | | | |
|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Project No | | | |
| Lead Partner | | | |
| Partner/s | | | |
| Project title | | | |
| PARTNERSHIP RELEVANCE | | | |
| No | CRITERIA | Analysis | Reference/ comments |
| 1. | Does the Lead partner demonstrate the capacity to coordinate, manage, control and monitor the overall implementation of the project? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part B B.1.5 Part C C.7 |
| 2. | Do project partners have competence, as well as the necessary capacity to implement the project activities (financial, human resources, etc.)? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part B B.1.5 |
| 3. | Is the composition of partnership relevant to the proposed project? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.3 |
| 4. | Are the project partners experienced in participating in and/or managing EU co-financed projects or other international projects? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part B B.1.5 |

| PROJECT RELEVANCE AND COOPERATION CHARACTER | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| No | CRITERIA | Analysis | Reference/ comments |
| 5. | Does the project overall objective clearly contribute to the achievement of the programme priority specific objective? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.1 |
| 6. | Does the project address common challenges of the Programme relevant to the particular needs and constraints of the border region? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.2.1 C.2.2 |
| 7. | Does the project bring real and strong Cross-border impact and longterm results in respect of the Programme's objectives? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.2.3 C.4.1 Whole AF |
| 8. | Does the project contribute to the achievement of Programme's objectives, output and result indicators, and is the contribution realistic and sufficient? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.4 C.5 |
| 9. | Does the proposal demonstrate clearly contribution to a wider strategy on one or more policy levels (EU/national/regional)? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.2.5 |
| 10. | Does the project demonstrate synergies with past or current EU projects or initiatives? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.2.6 |
| 11. | Does the project build on available knowledge, experiences and lesson learned from the past and is it capitalised? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.2.7 |
| 12. | Are the target groups and beneficiaries relevant to project activities, clearly defined and quantified, and clearly benefiting from cooperation? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.2.3 C.2.4 |
| 13. | Does the project proposal make a positive contribution to the horizontal principles, in particular sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and equality between men and women? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.7.6 Whole AF |
| PROJECT INTERVENTION LOGIC | | | |
| No | CRITERIA | Analysis | Reference/ comments |
| 14. | Are the project work packages defined, realistic, achievable and necessary for achievement of the objectives? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.4 |
| 15. | Is the relation between project specific objectives of the work packages and proposed project outputs ensured? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.4 |
| 16. | Are the project outputs and results realistic and do they contribute to Programme indicators (is it possible to achieve them with given resources – i.e., time, partners, budget - and are they realistic based on the quantification provided)? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.4 C.5 C.6 Part D |
| 17. | Does the project have clear and justified potential for durability and transferability of the project results? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.8.2 |

| | | | C.8.3 C.4.1 |
|-----------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|
| | | | |
| OPERATIONAL SCREENING | | | |
| No | CRITERIA | Analysis | Reference/ comments |
| 18. | Is the project time plan realistic and are activities, deliverables and outputs in a logical time-sequence? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.6 |
| 19. | Are the proposed activities and deliverables relevant and lead to planned outputs and results? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.4 C.5 |
| 20. | Is distribution of tasks among partners appropriate (e.g., sharing of tasks is clear, logical, in line with partners' role in the project, etc.)? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.4 |
| 21. | Are the communication and visibility activities appropriate and efficient? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part C C.4 |
| 22. | Is the project budget used in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and does it comply with the eligibility rules of expenditure? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part D D.2 Part E E.3 |
| 23. | Is the project budget logically planned and proportionate to the proposed work packages, project outputs and project's contribution to the selected programme indicators? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part D D.2 Part E E.3 |
| 24. | Are the estimated expenditures necessary for the implementation of the project and are the prices realistic and market based? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | Part D D.2 Part E E.3 |
| COMMENTS | | | |
| Assessor's name: | | Assessor's signature: | Date of evaluation: |

If the project proposal has received "No" on a specific criterion/a, the SWG could request additional documentation or corrections of the already submitted documents or project proposal.

During the screening of the project proposal the pre-contracting procedures for budget optimization and projects' content modifications will be conducted by the SWG members:

1. Budget optimization and projects' content modifications - final review of the budget of the project proposal, making revisions of unit rates, based on both the recommendations of the assessors and the good practices of the MA and NA in terms of transparent and market-oriented financial allocations.
2. Documentary check of presence/lack of double financing – assessment of whether or not the proposed action/s has not already been financed under other EU funded Programmes;

2. Check for compliance with the State Aid rules. Detailed information about State Aid rules is provided in Attachment 1 "State Aid and De Minimis Provisions" to this Guidelines for Applicant;
3. Performance of on-the-spot visit in case the project proposal envisage works or supply requiring permanent installation – assessment of whether or not the object, subject to the proposed investment, really exists and is in a physical condition as described in the project proposal and/or has not already been developed or is currently under development.

Following the screening process described above, and decision of the SB, the proposal will be presented to the Monitoring Committee for final decision.

Complaint procedure

In case of disagreement with the outcome of the selection procedure, the Lead partner may lodge a complaint towards the decision of the MC, following the standard complaint procedure described in **Attachment 2 "Complaint Procedure"** to these Guidelines for Applicants.

7 Contracting

Contracting is the procedure carried out in order to conclude a Subsidy contract between the Lead partner and the MA for the implementation of a project, approved for financing by decision of the MC. This means that the Lead partner is responsible for implementation of the whole project.

IMPORTANT

The Lead partner shall sign a Subsidy contract for the whole amount of the approved budget (including the total IPA funds) with the Managing Authority.

The implementation of the project may start only after the Subsidy contract is signed by both the MA and the Lead partner and is registered in the Registry system of the MA.

Draft Subsidy contract (Annex C) is presented attached to these Guidelines for Applicants.

Please, note that the MA maintains register for the subsidy granted under the de minimis rule.

| INDICATIVE SCHEDULE FOR SELECTION AND CONTRACTING OF THE PROJECT PROPOSALS | |
|--|--|
| Type of procedure | Term for implementation* |
| Screening (Administrative compliance and eligibility check, Technical and Quality assessment, budget optimization and projects' content modifications, and pre-contracting procedures) | Up to 2 months after the deadline for submission of the project proposal |
| Contracting | Up to 1 months after approval of the project proposal by the MC |

** Please note that the term for implementation of the respective procedure is indicative.*

8 State aid and de minimis provisions

Within the (INTERREG VI-A) IPA Bulgaria Türkiye Programme no state aid is granted.

In case activities of economic character are included in the project proposal, it could be financed only under the de minimis rule. In this case the provisions of Commission Regulation (EU) No 2023/2831 of 13 December 2023 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid shall apply.

All activities planned by project partners within the project will be subject to check for compliance with the state aid and de minimis rules.

The Turkish applicants should follow the applicable provisions set out in Regulation (EU) 2023/2831, as well as national regulations regarding State aid.

IMPORTANT

Detailed information related to financing of state aid relevant activities is presented in Attachment 2 "State Aid and De Minimis Provisions" to these Guidelines for applicants.