



**GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS
FOR
OPEN CALL
FOR INVESTMENT PROJECT PROPOSALS
PRIORITY 1. GREENER BORDER REGION**

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1.1. ENHANCING PROTECTION AND
PRESERVATION OF NATURE, BIODIVERSITY, AND GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING IN URBAN AREAS, AND
REDUCING ALL FORMS OF POLLUTION**

NO 2021TC16IPCB006 – 2023 – 3

**Deadline for submission of the project proposals in JEMS
15th of September 2023, 23:59 h. East European time (EET)**

Glossary of Acronyms

AA	Audit Authority
AF	Application Form
AWG	Assessment Working Group
BC	Budget category
CBC	Cross-border Cooperation
EIA/AA	Environmental Impact Assessment/ Appropriate Assessment
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession assistance
JEMS	Joint Electronic Information System
JS	Joint Secretariat
JWG	Joint Working Group for Strategic Planning and Programming of INTERREG-IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme
LP	Lead Partner
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MS	Member State
NA	National Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
PRAG	Practical Guide for Procurement and Grants for European Union External Actions
SCO	Simplified Cost Options
SWOT	Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats
TA	Technical Assistance
VAT	Value Added Tax
Interreg-IPA Programme	Interreg VI-A IPA Bulgaria North Macedonia Programme (2021 – 2027)
TSIM	Territorial Strategy for Integrated Measures



MOEW	Ministry of Environment and Waters
EAR	Environmental Assessments Report
EA	Environmental Assessments
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
FRMP	Flood River Management Plan



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Preface

DISCLAIMER

Please note that the expenditures for the applicants from the Republic of North Macedonia will be reimbursed after entering into force of the Financing Agreement between the European Commission and the Government of Republic of North Macedonia!

These Guidelines for Applicants will serve as an essential reference document for the potential applicants applying for funding under the Call for Project Proposals with ref. No 2021TC16IPCB007 – 2023-3 within the framework of the INTERREG VI-A IPA Bulgaria – North Macedonia Programme 2021-2027. The Guidelines for Applicants include the following integral parts, which must be considered in their entirety by the Applicant:

- Attachments:
 - Attachment 1.1 “State Aid and De Minimis Provisions” – contains important information about the rules for financing of state aid relevant activities;
 - Attachment 1.2 Factsheet - De minimis Support Interreg VI-A IPA Bulgaria North Macedonia;
 - Attachment 2 “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 Joint Monitoring Committee regarding project’ selection and financing;
 - Attachment 3 “Instruction for electronic submission of project proposals (JEMS)” - contains important information about access to the electronic system and submission of project proposal;
 - Attachment 4 “Indicators”;
 - Attachment 5 “Assessment and selection of the applications” – contains the information for the stages in the assessment process and selection of project proposals;
 - Attachment 6 “SEA mitigation measures and indicators on the INTERREG VI-A IPA Bulgaria - North Macedonia 2021-2027 and Territorial Strategy for Integrated Measures, agreed with the Environmental Assessment Opinion No.12-6/2022 of the Bulgarian Minister of Environment and Waters”.

- Application Form – to be filled in by the project partners;
- Annexes A to the Application form – contain templates of all declarations that must be submitted by the project partners together with DNSH assessment and Project Proposal;
- Annex C - Subsidy contract – draft version (for information purposes only).

It is recommended that the applicants submitting the proposals under the current call examine carefully, besides the present Guidelines for Applicants, the Programme Document, which is available on the website of the Programme: <http://www.ipa-cbc-007.eu/>

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:

- 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);
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2236 of 15 December 2021 on the specific rules for implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an 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) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012;
- 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 – North Macedonia Programme approved by European Commission on 29.11.2022 by Decision C(2022)8880, with programme reference number 2021TC16IPCB006;
- Memorandum on Implementation of INTERREG VI-A IPA Bulgaria – North Macedonia Programme CCI Number: 2021TC16IPCB006 between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (to be adopted);
- Financing Agreement between the European Commission and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (to be adopted);
- Decision of the Monitoring Committee of INTERREG VI-A IPA Bulgaria – North Macedonia Programme from Written procedure No.4, adopted on the 2th of June 2023.

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 – North Macedonia 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 Investment Project Proposals under **Priority 1 “Greener border region” and the respective specific objective 1.1. “Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution “ (ref. No 2021TC16IPCB007 – 2023-3)**

The possible modifications in the Application package will be communicated via the Programme website (<http://www.ipa-cbc-007.eu>).

1.1. Overview of INTERREG VI-A IPA Bulgaria – North Macedonia Programme

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

The programme document is available on the following websites:

- [www.ipa-cbc-007.eu /](http://www.ipa-cbc-007.eu/)
- www.mrrb.bg
- <https://www.eufunds.bg/bg> www.eufunds.bg
- <http://mls.gov.mk/>

The programme continues the evolution of the EU’s cross-border initiatives, reflected in the Interreg - IPA Bulgaria – North Macedonia CBC Programme 2014-2020, Bulgaria – Republic

of Macedonia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007 – 2013 and Neighborhood Programme between Bulgaria and North Macedonia.

1.1.1 Programme area

The border is 165 km long with three operating border crossings (Zlatarevo-Novo Selo, Stanke Lisichkovo- Delchevo and Gyueshevo- Deve Bair). The total programme area covers 18 087 km². The population of the programme area is 942 045 inhabitants. The population of the part of Bulgaria is 417 757 while on the side of North Macedonia is 524 288.

The Programme area includes on Bulgarian side two NUTS III districts - **Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil** comprising of 23 municipalities:

- **District of Blagoevgrad:** 14 municipalities - Bansko, Belitsa, Blagoevgrad, Gotce Delchev, Garmen, Kresna, Petrich, Razlog, Sandanski, Satovcha, Simitli, Strumiani, Hadjidimovo, Yakoruda;
- **District of Kyustendil:** 9 municipalities - Bobovdol, Boboshevo, Dupnitsa, Kocherinovo, Kyustendil, Nevestino, Rila, Sapareva Banya, Trekliano.

The Programme area of the North Macedonia comprises the **North-East, the East and the South-East NUTS III statistical regions**, consisting of 27 municipalities:

- **North-East region:** 6 municipalities - Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Rankovce, Kumanovo, Lipkovo and Staro Nagoricane;
- **South-East region:** 10 municipalities - Valandovo, Gevgelija, Bogdanci, Dojran, Radovis, Konce, Strumica, Bosilovo, Vasilevo and Novo Selo;
- **East region:** 11 municipalities - Berovo, Pehcevo, Vinica, Kocani, Cesinovo -Oblesevo, Zrnovci, Probistip, Stip, Karbinci, Delcevo and Makedonska Kamenica.

1.1.2 Programme Strategy

According to the EU 2030 biodiversity strategy, ecosystems and their services can be maintained and enhanced by establishing Green Infrastructure (GI) and restoring degraded ecosystems. In order to provide a lasting impact on the ecological infrastructure, the current Programme interacts with the Environmental Programme 2021-2027 in fostering strengthening biodiversity, "green" infrastructure in the urban areas and reducing pollution. The concept of "green infrastructure development" is a relatively new one and special attention will be paid to promoting it and to developing pilot solutions that can be replicated later on. Therefore, the implementation of the specific objective will be based on the

following approaches: integration (integration and coordination of urban green with other urban infrastructures in terms of physical and functional relations), multi-functionality (combine ecological, social and economic/abiotic, biotic and cultural functions of green spaces), and connectivity (physical and functional connections between green spaces at different scales and from different perspectives).

For more information on the EU concept and EU practices of green infrastructure relevance, you may check out the following sources:

- [European Green Deal](#)
- [Investing in green infrastructure - DG Environment, EC](#);
- [EU Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)
- [Green Infrastructure and territorial cohesion. European Environment Agency \(2011\). Technical Report No 18/2011](#)
- [EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030](#)
- [Guidance on a strategic framework for further supporting the deployment of EU-level green and blue infrastructure](#) – European Commission Staff Working Document
- [Typology of green infrastructure](#)
- [Guidelines for conserving connectivity through ecological networks and corridors](#)

1.1.3 The programme overall objective

The programme is expected to contribute to the EU accession process and at the same time to the strengthening of the territorial cohesion. Having regard to this, as well as taking into account the need for preservation of cultural, social and economic links between the regions of both countries, the MC agreed on the following overall objective of the Programme:

To strengthen the territorial cohesion of Bulgaria - North Macedonia Cross-border region.

📌 IMPORTANT

For further details on Programme strategy please refer to the Programme document available at: <http://www.ipa-cbc-007.eu/> .

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 – “Greener border region”, “More connected border region” and “Integrated development of cross-border region”.

The current call is focused on **Priory 1 “Greener border region” and the respective specific objective 1.1. “Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution”**.

1.1.5 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.

There are two types of indicators – output indicators and result indicators. The output indicators measure the specific deliverables from the project actions (e.g. hectares of green infrastructure supported), while the result indicators measure the outcomes of these actions (the effects of the interventions supported, with particular reference to the direct addressees, population targeted or users of infrastructure).

📌 IMPORTANT

All output and result indicators are mandatory!

Please, refer to Attachment 4, which provides detail information on the use of indicators in your project proposal.

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-North Macedonia Programme (CCI 2021TC16IPCB006) 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) – Ministry of Local-Self Government of Republic of North Macedonia is the counterpart for the Managing Authority and is in charge of the coordination of programme in North Macedonia. 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 Kyustendil (Bulgaria), and JS-branch office is based in Strumica (North Macedonia).

1.3. Programme Financial Allocation for the current Call for Project Proposals

The total budget available for the present call is **4 561 091** Euro of which 3 876 927 Euro EU financial contribution (ERDF+IPA funds) and 684 164 Euro national contributions from national budgets of the partnering countries.

1.4. No-profit principle

The meaning of a no-profit principle is in accordance with Article 192 of Regulation 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union.

The verification of the no-profit principle shall be applied as follows:

The grant amount representing the EU funds and national co-financing funds may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit for the project partners. Profit is defined as a surplus of the grant amount received and the revenue generated by the operation over the total amount of eligible expenditures incurred by the project partner and verified by the

Managing authority. If this calculation results in a profit for the project partner, the Managing authority will reduce the final amount of the grant with the profit generated.

The revenues may be from but not limited to cash in-flows directly paid by users for the goods or services provided by the operation, such as charges borne directly by users for the use of infrastructure, sale or rent of land or buildings, or payments for services, payment received by the project partner arising from contractual penalties as a result of a breach of contract between the partner and a sub-contractor, interests accrued on the received pre-financing payment into the bank account using for the operation, etc.

For the purpose of respecting the no-profit principle and for the proper verification of the revenues generated each project partner should keep detailed, timely, adequate and traceable information and accounts concerning the generated revenues during the implementation period of the operation. A declaration for revenues generated with the relevant supporting documents shall be requested by each project partner at the stage of the last reporting of expenditures.

2 Rules of the Call for Proposals

2.1. Cross-border impact

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.

👉 IMPORTANT

A clear cross-border impact is when the implementation of the projects ensures tangible results in the cross-border area (in both countries), otherwise, the effect should be considered at local level and the project will not be approved for financing.

The current call will support only those proposals which demonstrate clear cross-border results and added value to the Programme area.

2.1.1 Cooperation criteria

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

Joint development 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 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 importance of the cross-border approach to the topic addressed should be clearly demonstrated. In this matter the project partners from the two participating countries have to cooperate mandatory in **at least both joint development and joint implementation and, additionally, one of the other two cooperation criteria: joint financing or joint staffing (as described above) as required by Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021.**

2.2 Horizontal principles

The Bulgaria - North Macedonia Interreg VI-A IPA 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 EU¹.

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

1. Respect for fundamental rights and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in the implementation of the Funds;
2. Equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programmes;
3. Prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programmes. In particular, accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account throughout the preparation and implementation of the projects;
4. Sustainable development as set out in Article 11 TFEU, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the "do no significant harm"(DNSH) principle. And the Green public procurement (green public procurement criteria and social considerations as well as innovation incentives should be incorporated into public procurement procedures). To ensure maximum adherence to the principles and targets of the Green Deal, each project supported by the programme, should have gone a positive DNSH assessment during the selection process;
5. Projects are expected to contribute to climate change and biodiversity goals, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030;
6. The programme promotes the:
 - New European Bauhaus (NEB) principle of linking aesthetics, nature and environment, heritage and investment with sustainable socio-economic development of the cross-border

¹ Horizontal principles as per Article 9 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021

region, ensuring accessibility and socialisation;

- Healthy environment, waste treatment and recycling;
- Sustainable energy planning - RES (Renewable Energy Sources) and EE (Energy Efficiency).

Durability of results principle have to be embedded in the projects implementation through regular monitoring practices to make sure the provided funding is strongly linked with the sustainability of the achieved results and bring in the desired territorial effect.

Full respect of the Union environmental acquis should be ensured by the projects. Applicants 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, applicants are advised to include measures in their proposals (if applicable) that will contribute to the diminishing of the environmental impact of their actions. During the assessment of applications, consideration is given to the project's adherence to the horizontal principles and the quality of the planned specific actions. Approved projects will report regularly to the Programme their achievements. The measures planned in the beginning of the projects and consequently developed by the end of the projects considering the horizontal principles will be further monitored by the Programme. Finally, the contribution and consideration of horizontal principles in projects 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.

The Programme encourages Green Public Procurement (GPP)² related to the sustainable measures that supports the inclusion of additional `green` criteria in tendering whenever

² a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured

legally possible. Practicing green procurement involves sourcing goods and services that are produced and supplied in a sustainable way. When you procure goods/services, pay attention to the following aspects or review your procurement policies:

- Are manufactured in a sustainable fashion
- Do not contain toxic materials or ozone-depleting substances
- Can be recycled and/or are produced from recycled materials
- Are made from renewable materials
- Do not make use of excessive packaging
- Are designed to be repairable and not throwaway
- Here are some examples of green contracts:
- Energy efficient computers
- Office furniture from sustainable timber
- Low energy buildings
- Recycled paper
- Cleaning services using ecologically sound products
- Electric, hybrid or low-emission vehicles
- Electricity from renewable energy sources

IMPORTANT

When a project partner located in Bulgaria is a contracting authority or a contracting entity within the meaning of the Union law applicable to public procurement procedures, it shall apply national laws, regulations and administrative provisions - **Public Procurement Act (Закон за обществените поръчки)** or Government decree No. 160/2016 (Постановление ПМС №160/01.07.2016г. за определяне правилата за разглеждане и оценяване на оферти и сключването на договорите в процедурата за избор с публична покана от бенефициери на безвъзмездна финансова помощ от европейските структурни и инвестиционни фондове).

IMPORTANT

When a project partner located in North Macedonia is a contracting authority or a contracting entity for the award of supply of goods, works or services the procurement procedures provided for in Articles 178 and 179 of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable

to the general budget of the Union and points 36 to 41 of Chapter 3 of Annex I to Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 shall apply. In this case the partners must refer to and use the guidelines and templates of the **“Procurement and Grants for European Union External Actions – a Practical Guide” document (PRAG)**.

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, including activities for project preparation, 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 project results shall be made available for free to all interested individual or legal persons, in a non-discriminatory way. Making the project results available only for certain individual or legal persons is strictly forbidden.

2.4 Communication and Visibility

The communication and publicity measures for the interventions are designed to raise the awareness of the positive impact of the EU funding, to ensure the visibility of the EU funding opportunities, to provide information on thematic activities, and to contribute to the capitalization of achieved project outputs and results. Communication activities have to be integrated throughout the project application form in order to support the achievement and capitalization of project outputs and results. The general approach to communication should explain which instruments will be used in which way for what reason and how they will address audiences and target groups. There should be an emphasis on environmentally friendly activities and introducing carbon offsetting in events, physical or digital. Different types of communication and visibility activities could be applied.

Digital communication channels and instruments:

- Website - new website or dedicated sections, part of the websites of the organizations;
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) - dedicated to the project;
- E-events - meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, trainings;
- Short videos.

Standard communication channels and instruments:

- Photos;
- PR activities - press releases, publications, interviews, communication strategy;

- Signaling - plaques with the obligatory visibility elements at the building entrance of the applicant, flying the EU flag, banners/posters on public events);
- Promotional materials – banners, small gifts, gadgets.

Public events:

- Awareness campaign, meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, trainings, press events.

In order to maximize the impact of the communication efforts, the project partners should consider the following recommendations:

- Communication activities need to be closely linked to thematic project activities;
- Communication activities should ensure that relevant groups are aware of the available outputs and deliverables to be used;
- Communication activities need to be timely and appropriate in terms of resources spent and expected impact, and be suitable to the target group;
- Communication and visibility activities should be embedded in the thematic work packages;
- Even if the Programme official language is English, all communication activities towards the public and the target groups should be carried out in the language of the participants;
- All activities including investment activities related to infrastructure/works, supply of equipment and vehicles, as well as major project results, must acknowledge the EU support and display the European emblem and funding statement. The EU emblem should be accompanied by a funding statement “Co-funded by the European Union” mentioning. The funding statement “Co-funded by the European Union” shall always be spelled out in full in the operational language of the EU programme - English and of the official language of the respective country, and be placed next to the emblem.

More detailed practical guidelines about Communication and raising EU visibility are provided by the European Commission in the Guidance for external actions – 2022, available at the following address: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility-guidance-external-actions_en.

2.5 Eligibility Criteria

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

- Eligibility of applicants (see section 2.5.1);

- Eligibility of activities (see section 2.5.2);
- 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.**

If the project does not comply with this requirement **it will be eliminated at the eligibility assessment stage.**

Criteria for Eligibility of Partners

Partners must comply with all of the following general eligibility criteria:

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

Exception is made for subsidiary structures of regional/national public organizations. In case a structure of regional/national public organizations is not and cannot act as a legal entity, its legally established central organization, shall be the project partner;

OR

be NGO/non-profit making organizations with registration into sphere of ecology, environmental and biodiversity protection, education and other activities, relevant to the specific objective for enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution, dated **no later than two years before the launch of current call;**

OR

be university or other academic/educational/training institution

- **be registered in the eligible Programme area;**

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

- 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.

👉 IMPORTANT

The project candidates can apply with **only one project proposal** as a Lead partner or as a Project partner.

If a project partner participates in more than one project, all the projects in which it is directly involved in will be eliminated.

2.5.1.2 Lead Partner Principle

The Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 on special provisions for the European Territorial Cooperation Objective (Interreg), of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 (Article 26), establishes the Lead Partner Principle.

👉 IMPORTANT

The Lead partner should be appointed among the partners, who own/ have acquired management rights of the property on which the investment activities will be implemented.

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 have 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 contract and in the Project Partnership Agreement template (Annex A1).

📌 IMPORTANT

A partner can never act as a **contractor in the same project 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 same project.

2.5.1.3 Rules concerning partnership

Operations under the programme shall involve partners from both partnering countries, at least one of the each country. Partners shall cooperate in the development and implementation of Programme operations, as well as in the staffing or financing, or both, thereof. Where there are two or more partners, one of them shall be designated by all the partners as the Lead partner.

The maximum number of partners, including associated partners in a project **shall not exceed 4 including the Lead Partner.**

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

All partners must sign a 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.**

2.5.2 Eligibility of Activities

2.5.2.1 Project duration, grant amount and De minimis aid

Priority	Type of projects	Specific objective	Project Grant Amount (€)		Project Duration (months)
			Minimum grant	Maximum grant	
Greener border region	Investment*	1.1.Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.	500 000	1 000 000	12 – 30

*** projects, including only soft measures will not be supported under the current call**

Investments have to be with predominant character of green infrastructure development and the value of the construction component - **BC 6.Costs for infrastructure and works at least 65% of the total eligible costs of the project.**

“**Soft measures**” are primarily oriented towards conducting studies, developing concepts, developing materials and providing training, raising awareness on specific "green" topics and other eligible activities - demonstration and pilot models etc.

Financial support given to undertakings in the framework of the Interreg VI-A IPA Bulgaria North Macedonia Programme is granted under the de minimis provisions, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 1407/2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid.

The undertakings active in the fishery and aquaculture sector covered by Council Regulation (EC) No 104/2000 and in the primary production of agricultural products, are not eligible for financing under current Call for investment projects for Priority 1“Greener border region”.

Project partners registered in North Macedonia should also follow the applicable national regulations regarding State aid.

Additional information regarding applicable de minimis rules is provided in Attachment 1.1 and Attachment 1.2.

2.5.2.2 Activities' location

The implementation of project activities under Priority 1 will cover the **entire Programme area**. The applicants are asked to demonstrate that those activities have cross-border impact on the Programme area and contribute to the specific objective of Priority 1 under the Programme.

📌 IMPORTANT

Investment activities for development of "green" infrastructure shall be implemented in **Urban areas** and **Peri urban areas**.

Investment activities for development of "green" infrastructure in **rural, forest and non-urban areas will not be supported**.

Definition for **Urban area**³ - area which physically forms part of a town or city and is characterised by an important share of built-up surfaces, high density of population and employment and significant amounts of transport and other infrastructure (as opposed to rural areas). Urban areas may also comprise non built-up, green areas generally used for recreational purposes by urban dwellers.

Definition for **Peri urban areas**⁴ - areas that are in some form of transition from strictly rural to urban. These areas often form the immediate urban-rural interface and may eventually evolve into being fully urban. Peri-urban areas are places where people are key components: they are lived-in environments.

2.5.2.3 Eligible Activities

Priority 1 – Greener border region

This Priority aims at exploitation of new forms of ecosystem-based services, that are based on the large variety of greening measures and contribute to the maintenance of healthy green, physical and living environment.

³ https://inspire.ec.europa.eu/codelist/SupplementaryRegulationValue/7_1_4_4_UrbanArea

⁴ https://inspire.ec.europa.eu/codelist/SupplementaryRegulationValue/7_1_4_7_PeriUrbanAreas

The non-exhaustive list of actions to be supported under Specific objective: Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution includes:

- *Support for joint strategies, action plans and concepts for developing new tools, instruments for enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution, aimed at achieving the output indicators: Jointly developed solutions, Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects;*
- *Transferring solutions between relevant stakeholders, joint capacity building activities;*
- *Investments in building greens - roofing and facade greening (green balconies, green walls, green roofs, atrium spaces, green pavements, green fences, noise barriers, etc.);*
- *Investments in developing urban and peri-urban green areas, including improving connections between green spaces (tree alley and street tree/hedge, street green and green verge, green and coloured squares, permeable surfaces, infiltration trenches, storm water green streets/rain gardens, detention basins naturalized storm water pond, bio-retention);*
- *Investments in developing natural urban green areas (urban parks, parks/gardens that are unique examples of garden art and landscape architecture with the status of cultural and historical heritage, pocket parks/parklets, neighbourhood green spaces, institutional green spaces, forest, scrubland, abandoned and derelict area with patches of wilderness).*

IMPORTANT

Please, note that project activities:

- **should not fall** under Natura 2000 (for project partners from Bulgaria) or equivalent areas according to the national legislation of North Macedonia (for project partners from North Macedonia);
- aiming at floods protection, soil erosion prevention, reducing surface water and groundwater status deterioration, afforestation and blue infrastructure **are not eligible for support** under Specific objective: Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution, to the achievement of which the current call is dedicated.

In accordance with article 22 (i) of the Interreg Regulation, in order to be eligible for support, Interreg operations must not be directly affected by a reasoned opinion by the Commission in respect of an infringement within the scope of Article 258 TFEU that puts at risk the legality and regularity of expenditure or the performance of operations. In this respect, before developing the project proposal, the partners are encouraged to check if any reasoned opinion affects the project at the level of Bulgaria. This link can be used to find the active

reasoned opinions. If there is a reasoned opinion, the project partners are not advised to continue with the development of the project, except where there are reasons to believe that the infringement will be lifted within the deadline for the project submission set by this Guide.

The following measures recommended in the Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) of the Programme 2021-2027 also should be respected in preparation of the project proposals:

- ✓ Investment proposals for infrastructure and works have to comply with the existing spatial development plans of the territory, as well as national, regional and local strategic, planning and regulatory documents, other available planned projects with similar and/or convergent activities in order to achieve the necessary synchronization in the implementation of project procedures by the involved institutional bodies;
- ✓ When developing the project proposals, it is recommended that the beneficiaries include activities and measures from the relevant strategic documents for adaptation to climate change and foresee measures to ensure the sustainability of the projects;
- ✓ The investment proposals for development of green infrastructure will be assessed for their compliance with the current RBMP (River Basin Management Plan) and FRMP (Flood River Management Plan) and the Water Act, as well as compliance with the available results of the RBMP and FRMP update for the period 2022-2027 (applicable for Bulgarian partners), and the applicable provisions of the National Water protection legislation for partners from the Republic of North Macedonia;
- ✓ The project proposals shall include requirements for the works related to activities and measures for the protection of soil resources and reclamation in order to prevent the occurrence of erosion processes and maximal restoration of disturbed lands. During the implementation of the construction activities it is necessary to take measures for protection of the soil resources (preliminary seizure of the humus soil and its utilization for the purposes of reclamation);
- ✓ In the planned activities for construction of green areas not to use invasive alien species.

Detailed information for SEA mitigation measures on the Interreg VI-A IPA Bulgaria - North Macedonia is given in Attachment 6.

🔔 IMPORTANT

The Infrastructure and works investment activities shall be carried out on municipal or state property by the project partner who owns or has acquired management rights for the respective property.

2.5.3 Eligibility of Expenditures (costs)

2.5.3.1 General principles

The hierarchy of rules applicable to the current call for proposal under Interreg VI-A IPA Bulgaria – North Macedonia Programme are as follows⁵:

- European level - EU regulations;
- Programme level - specific rules decided for the Interreg VI-A IPA Bulgaria – North Macedonia Programme;
- National/regional level - rules applicable in each participating country;
- 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 based on supporting 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 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;

⁵ See in the part „Legal basis“

- 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;
- 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 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.

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 the Simplified Cost Options (SCO) shall 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;
- Unit Costs – maximum prices of certain goods, items, etc.

2.5.3.3 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 national legislation.

- Staff employed by the beneficiary for management of the project

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.

Form of reimbursement:

Within the current call for proposal, staff costs shall be reimbursed as a flat rate of up to 20 % of the eligible costs under BC 4, BC 5 and BC 6. 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 has been established. The proper appointment of the project team has to be in line with the respective legislation and is a responsibility of the beneficiaries themselves.

2. Office and administrative costs

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

Office and administrative costs cover operating and administrative expenses of beneficiaries and 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, Office and administrative costs shall be reimbursed as a 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 BC 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.

3. Travel and accommodation costs

The category of expenditures covers travel and accommodation costs of project team members and shall be limited to the following:

- 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, Travel and accommodation costs shall be reimbursed as a 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 BC 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.

📌 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 legal entity 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 real costs (contracts or written agreements of equivalent value), supported by tangible and documented invoices or claims issued by the providers of 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 including services for project management activities, legal consultancy and notarial services, technical expertise.

All costs related to external expertise must be according to the market prices at the time of submission of the project proposals

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 that need to be presented at the verification stage. Public procurement rules, described in point 2.3 should be respected

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 for participants in the events;
- 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.

📌 IMPORTANT

Partners can report services costs (cost for organization of events) on the bases **of the unit cost or real costs**.

Form of reimbursement:

In case the expenditures shall be reimbursed on the basis **of real costs** all supporting documents proving the expenditures need to be presented at the verification stage. The real costs have to be based on the real market price. In this relation Market analysis for the planned costs have to be provided - done either by asking for offers from at least three providers or by print screen (and indicating the websites) out the price offers for the specific

items from the web pages of at least three providers or prints from national systems on public procurements, or an independent evaluation of the cost.

In case the expenditures shall be reimbursed **as unit costs**, so defined costs according to the duration of the event and number of participants should be respected:

- **14,00 EURO unit cost (per participant) in one day events;**
- **72,00 EURO unit cost (per participant per day) in multi-day events.**

Examples:

* 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 = total costs EUR 280

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

2 days * 20 participants = 40 units

40 units * unit costs EUR 72 = total costs EUR 2 880

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

The event unit cost 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;

👉 IMPORTANT

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

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 to achieving the project's objectives.

Equipment costs are 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

For equipment rented or leased for certain period during the project lifetime rental or leasing costs for the respective period are eligible. The total expenditures for rent/lease of equipment can never exceed the purchase price of the respective equipment

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

The investment costs for infrastructure and works (BC6) must form at least 65 % of the total eligible costs of the project.

In case of non-compliance with the required minimum percentage of the investment costs, the project proposal will be rejected!

All investment activities should be implemented on municipal or state-owned property.

In case of non-compliance with the required type of ownership of the investment object, the project proposal will be rejected!

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.

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

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:

Only projects approved for financing by the Monitoring Committee with signed Subsidy contracts with the Managing Authority are entitled to receive the reimbursement of the preparation costs in a form of a lump sum **of EUR 12 000** (preparation of Application package and technical documentation).

The amount shall be included in the lead partner's budget at the application stage. With the first report, the lump sum for preparation costs shall 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 is 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.

2.5.3.4 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.

2.5.3.5 Eligible expenditures for VAT

The expenditures for VAT is eligible for operations the total cost of which is below EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT).

Value added tax ('VAT') *excise duties, customs duties and any other indirect taxes* shall not be eligible for Union support, except for operations, investments and small projects funds listed under Article 64(1)(c) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

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

2.6 How to get the Applicants' Package and fill in the Application Form

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

- Programme website: <http://www.ipa-cbc-007.eu/bg/2020>
- MA website: www.mrrb.government.bg
- NA website: <http://mls.gov.mk/>
- EU Structural Funds in Bulgaria website: www.eufunds.bg

The applicant may submit questions of substance in writing up to 10 calendar days before the deadline for submission of proposal. The JS will reply no later than 5 calendar days before the deadline for the submission of proposal.

Questions may be sent by e-mail or by fax to the address listed below, indicating clearly the reference of the Call for Proposal - No 2021TC16IPCB006 – 2022 – 2:

Tel/Fax: +359 78 58 01 01, +359 78 55 11 85;

E-mail: joint.secretariat.kyustendil@gmail.com

The Application Form and Annexes 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 in English.

Please complete the application form and its annexes carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

🔔 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.

Please note that scanned version of the Application Form must be signed on each page by the Lead Partner or signed with electronic signature version of the Application Form by the Lead partner.

APPLICATION FORM**PART A – PROJECT IDENTIFICATION****A.1 Project identification**

On the Part A.1. of the Application form you should fill the project title, project acronym and project duration. The Programme priority and Programme specific objective are filled in automatically. The Project ID is automatically created. The name of the Lead partner organization (original language or English language) are filled in automatically after filling Part B of the AF.

A.2 Project summary

Here the Project partners must give short overview of the project and describe in English the following:

- the common challenge of the programme area you are jointly tackling in your project and how the project proposal can positively affect the addressed territorial challenge (make sure you build up your arguments on the project compulsory combination of investment and soft measures);
- the overall objective of the project and the expected change your project will make to the current situation;
- the main outputs you will produce and those who will benefit from them;
- the approach you plan to take and why a cross-border approach is needed;
- what is new/original about the project.

A.3 Project budget overview

The information is filled in automatically after filling parts B and E of the AF.

A.4 Project outputs and results overview

The Programme output indicators, Measurement unit, Aggregated value per programme output indicator, Project output number, Project output (Output title), Output target value, Programme result indicator, Result indicator baseline, Measurement unit and Result indicator target value are filled in automatically after filling parts C.4 and C.5 of the AF.

PART B – PROJECT PARTNERS

Partner overview

The organization abbreviation, Partner role in the project, NUTS and Partner total eligible budget are filled in automatically after filling part B and E of the AF.

📌 IMPORTANT

Please fill the information below for every project partner starting with B.1 for Lead partner / beneficiary

B.1. Project partner 1

- **B.1.1. Project identity**

Select the partner role in the project from the menu.

Indicate the abbreviated name of organisation.

State the official and *full name* of the organization in original language.

State the official and full name of the organization in English.

Indicate the department/unit/division of organisation (if applicable).

Legal and financial information

Select from the drop down menu the type of partner.

Select from the drop down menu the legal status of the partner.

Indicate the VAT number of the partner.

- **B.1.2. Partner address**

Partner main address

State the official address of the partner.

Address of department / unit / division (if applicable)

State the official address of the department / unit / division.

- **B.1.4 Legal representative**

State title, the first and the last name of the legal representative of the organisation

- **B.1.5 Contact person**

State title, the first and the last name of the contact person of the organisation, e-mail and telephone. For project partner 1/ Lead partner - the e-mail of the organization should be the same as in Annex A4, as far as the Programme bodies will use it for official communication with the Lead partner throughout the whole assessment process.

- **B.1.6 Partner motivation and contribution**

Describe the role (contribution and main activities) of your organisation in the project, paying attention to the organisation's thematic and legal competences and experiences relevant for the project.

Please, also indicate the capacity of the partners to implement the project activities (financial, human resources, etc.).

Describe the organisation's experience in participating in and/or managing EU co-financed projects or other international projects.

B.1.7 Partner budget

📌 IMPORTANT

The partner budget should only be filled in once the project duration in "A.1 Project identification", "B.1.1 Partner identity" and "C.4 Project work plan" are completed. This will help to ensure consistency between financial figures and the planned activities

In the "Partner Budget Options" select both three flat rate options (Staff costs flat rate, Office and administrative costs flat rate and Travel and accommodation flat rate) and fulfil the percentage in accordance with the data in p. 2.5.3 of the current guidelines. After filling the exact flat rate percentages, the amount of the respective BCs shall be calculated automatically.

For all other BCs, click on the "+ Add" button to add a new cost item.

For each cost category item, the following details have to be provided:

- Description of the expense
- Award procedure

- Comments
- Unit type (e.g. per contract, per item, per day, per participant, etc.)
- Number of units
- Price per unit

Select “+” to add other rows in the cost category.

The cost categories 6 “Equipment” and 7 “Infrastructure and works” have to be filled in by clicking on “+ add”. For each type of equipment or infrastructure and works, a clear description of the required item or works needs to be included. Different items or works have to be listed separately, i.e. a new row has to be created and filled in by clicking on “+” for each.

Co-financing

This table can only be filled in once the partner budget options are selected and the partner budget is completed.

This table displays the co-financing received by the programme and the partner contribution.

The source of funding to be selected from the drop-down menu in the respective field. The ERDF+IPA funds co-financing rate is 85% for all partners and this has to be indicated in the percentage field. The fields in partner contribution and the partner total eligible budget are then automatically calculated.

PART C – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

C.1 Project overall objective

The Programme priority specific objective will be filled automatically.

Here applicants need to describe the intervention logic of their project proposals – that is the logical linkages between the Programme priority specific objective, the project objective/s, the main project activities, the solution/s the activities will bring in and their ultimate effects on the targeted territories, groups (population and institutions) and the addressed policy area, including programme indicators. The addressed policy area is eligible only if it falls under the scope of the Programme priority specific objective ‘Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution’. For further information, please consult the Programme document, which is accessible [here](#).

Project partners need to clearly indicate the change the proposal is aiming to achieve and to make sure it is realistic, measurable and sustainable, i.e. it has broad lifespan.

Example (*please do not replicate it in your project proposal. The purpose of the example is to only describe the intervention logic of a project proposal*): The flyway of a bird species that traditionally goes through the cross-border region has been disrupted due to extensive construction (*the problem*). What are feasible solutions to restore the flyway (*the challenge*)? Apparently, there is a *need* to set up bird migration patterns on both sides of the border to gradually restore the flyway corridor of that particular bird. Thus, the desired *solution* may have three perspectives: infrastructural (e.g. building green roofs reported under indicator pair RCO 36/RCR 95), ornithological and institutional. The *change* that the project pursues is to have in place institutionalized greening measures (*result indicator RCR 104*) as mandatory for urban/periurban areas or buildings that cross bird migration routes. These measures have been developed, tested (*output indicator RCO 84*) and employed (*output indicator RCO 116*) in the course of the project implementation. It should be noted here, that project solutions may vary from one territory to another due to different territorial context. What matters at the end is the demonstrated cooperative efforts for jointly development of project solutions in tackling the addressed common cross-border territorial challenge.

With regard to the eligibility scope of project interventions, please pay attention to the following limitations when develop your project proposal:

- project interventions should not fall under Natura 2000 (for project partners from Bulgaria) or equivalent areas according to the legislation of North Macedonia (for project partners from North Macedonia);
- project interventions that strengthen floods protection, soil erosion prevention, reducing surface water and groundwater status deterioration, afforestation and blue infrastructure **are not eligible for support under the present call.**

Investment activities for development of "green" infrastructure shall be implemented in **Urban areas** and **Peri urban areas**.

C.2 Project relevance and context

- **C.2.1 What are the common territorial challenge(s) that will be tackled by the project?**

Please describe why your project is needed in the programme area and the relevance of your project for the programme area, in terms of common challenges and opportunities addressed.

You may wish to consult the Programme document (accessible [here](#)), where key territorial challenges in relation to protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure are identified. In general, these challenges can be summarized as follows:

- **exploit new forms of ecosystem-based services⁶ that are based on the large variety of greening measures.** *"Healthy biodiversity is the essential infrastructure that supports all forms of life on earth, including human life." Cristiana Paşca Palmer, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity;*
- **protect urban and peri-urban biodiversity as crucial component of the ecological connectivity.** *The conservation of natural corridors between habitats is essential to sustain biological diversity in a changing climate and to ensure the maintenance of ecological services to the community.*
- **prevention of biodiversity loss and reducing forms of pollution that fall within the eligibility scope of project actions.** *Species blinking out, shrinking populations and significant range contractions caused by human activities have negative impacts on biodiversity as well as ecosystem functions and services.*

- **C.2.2 How does the project tackle identified common challenges and/or opportunities and what is new about the approach the project takes?**

Please describe the process of jointly developing and testing pilot actions that are going to be employed, in the course of the project implementation, as solutions to addressed common cross-border territorial challenge from the thematic scope of the call. Make sure you also give information on how you intend to ensure a broader lifespan of the employed solution.

- **C.2.3 Why is cross-border cooperation needed to achieve the project's objectives and result?**

Please describe what the impact of the project on the cross-border area will be. You should explain why the project objectives cannot be efficiently reached acting only on a national/regional/local level and/or describe what benefits the project partners/target groups/project area/programme area gain in taking a cross-border approach.

- **C.2.4 Who will benefit from your project outputs?**

In the first column of each row, please select one of the pre-defined target groups from the drop-down list. In the second column explain in more detail exactly who will benefit from your project. Please have in mind that you should also quantified realistically the selected target groups.

For example, if you choose the category education, you need to explain which specific schools or groups of schools and in which territory and to provide number of schools.

- **C.2.5 How does the project contribute to wider strategies and policies?**

Please indicate to which strategies and policies your project will contribute. Then describe in what way you will contribute.

Make sure you are acquainted, at minimum, with the [European Green Deal](#), [the EU Green](#)

⁶ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/green-infrastructure_en

[Infrastructure Strategy](#), [the Biodiversity strategy for 2030](#) and the [new EU circular economy action plan \(CEAP\)](#), adopted in March 2020.

In addition project should be in compliance with the spatial plans of the territory, as well as national, regional and local strategic, planning and regulatory documents

- **C.2.6 Which synergies with past or current EU and other projects or initiatives will the project make use of?**

Please indicate the synergies of the project with past or current EU and other projects or initiatives.

Answering to that question requires some research of similar initiatives inside and outside the Programme area. You may wish to check out <https://keep.eu/projects/> for more information on that.

- **C.2.7 How does the project build on available knowledge?**

Please describe the experiences/lessons learned that the project draws on, and other available knowledge the project capitalises on.

C.3 Project partnership

Describe the structure of your partnership and explain why these partners are needed to implement the project and to achieve project objectives. What is the contribution of each partner to the project?

Here, you may provide concise, but compelling information on how the project partnership was set up (e.g. describing the experience of each partner in the thematic scope of the call, including partner's legal powers and competence to act in the proposed way).

C.4 Project work plan

Each project specific objective has a work plan (work package). Applicant can define more than one specific objective. This means that the project will have as many work packages as it will have specific objectives defined. It is recommended to have up to 3 work packages, but in some cases up to 5 should also be acceptable.

Only thematic work packages will be used. WP Project management is not a work package – instead, questions about how the project will be managed are in C.7. Communication activities also don't have a separate WP – instead, they are embedded in the thematic work packages.

There are also no separate investment work packages. The applicant will need to provide additional information about investments that will be included in the thematic work packages. You will need to link your investment activities (works and/or supply) with the relevant project objective and describe how these activities will contribute to the achievement of the project objective.

- **C.4.1 Work package 1 – Repeat of the whole section C.4.1 for each work package**

Objectives

- Indicate the work package title.
- Define one project specific objective that will be achieved when all activities in this work package are implemented and outputs delivered.

Please have in mind that your objectives should be:

- realistic and achievable by the end of the project;
 - specific (who needs project outputs delivered in this work package, and in which territory);
 - measurable – indicate the change you are aiming for.
- Please indicate the communication objective that will contribute to the achievement of the specific objective. Communication objectives aim at changes in a target audience's behaviour, knowledge or belief.

Investments

- The investment number is filled in automatically.
- Please indicate the investment title and the expected delivery period.
- In section Justification you should include the following information:
 - Explain why this investment is needed;
 - Indicate which partner assumes the implementation of the investment and describe its legal powers and rights to act in the proposed way. You need to specify the legislative framework for the implementation of the investment by referring to the exact legal acts and their articles.
 - Clearly describe the cross-border relevance of the investment;
 - Describe who is benefiting (e.g., partners, regions, target groups, etc.) from this investment, and in what way.
- Location of the physical investment - please describe a specific address where the investment will be located (select the country from the drop down menu and enter the city name), while clearly indicating the type of the targeted area – urban or peri-urban.
- Risks associated with the investment - describe the risk associated with the investment, go/no-go decisions, etc. (if any).
- Investment documentation
 - When it comes to works, the responsible project partner should provide either approved project in technical/works design phase or conceptual design phase (please see section 3.2. Supporting documents) of the planned investment. Please list all technical requirements and permissions (e.g., building permits) required for the investment according to the respective national legislation. Please attach them to this application form.

- Ownership – please answer to the following questions:
 - Who owns the site where the investment is located?

We remind you that the project partner who will be responsible for the implementation of the investment should be either an owner of the site/property subject to project interventions or it has already acquired management rights for the respective site/property in line with the State Property Act, Municipal Property Act and the Spatial Development Act (for partners from Bulgaria) and Law on the use and disposal of state-owned and municipal-owned items, Law on property and other real rights and Law on Spatial and Urban Planning (for partners from North Macedonia).

- Who will retain ownership of the investment at the end of the project?
- Who will take care of the maintenance of the investment? How will this be done?

Activities

Please describe the activities in this work package by which the project achieves the project specific objective and related communication objective(s).

List of activities

Activity 1.1 (repeat for each activity, using the button “Add activity”)

State the title of activity.

Select from the drop down menu the period of implementation of the activity.

Please describe the activity.

Select from the drop down menu the partner/s involved in implementation of the activity.

- Deliverables

Please add deliverables to your activity (repeat for each deliverable)

- Specify the deliverable title;
- Include short description of deliverable;
- Select from the drop down menu the delivery period.

Outputs

List of outputs

Based on the activities you need to implement to achieve the specific objective in this work package, please list below the outputs that will be delivered during the implementation. Please have in mind that the outputs should contribute directly to programme output indicators; i.e., have the same measurement unit and can be aggregated on project and programme level.

Output 1.1 (repeat for each output, using the button “Add output”)

Please state the output title.

Select from the drop down menu the Programme output indicator related to the output.

The measurement unit will be filled automatically.

Write down the target value of the output (number).

Select from the drop down menu the delivery period of the output.
Describe in more detail what will be delivered.

C.5 Project Results

Please describe what do you expect to change because of the activities you plan to implement and the outputs you plan to deliver? Please take a look at the programme result indicators and select those that you will contribute to.

Result 1 (repeat for each result, using the button “Add result”)

Please select from the drop down menu the Programme result indicator to which the project contributes.

The measurement unit will be filled automatically.

The baseline of the selected result indicator is prefilled.

Fill the target value of the result indicator.

Select from the drop down menu the delivery period of the result.

Result description - describe in more detail the change expected. Make sure the provided information here is consistent with the information in section C.1

C.6 Project Time Plan

The overview table is automatically generated from thematic work packages. It display activities (length), deliverables (delivery period), outputs (delivery period) and results (delivery period).

The time plan shows only periods, not months. The length of periods is 3 months.

C.7 Project management

In addition to the thematic work you will do in your project, you will need time and resources for coordination and internal communication. Please describe below how you plan to organise yourself to ensure the project work runs smoothly.

- **C.7.1 How will you coordinate your project?**

Please describe who will be responsible for coordination? Will you have any other management structures (e.g., thematic groups, WP managers)? How will the internal communication work?

- **C.7.2 Which measures will you take to ensure quality in your project?**

Describe specific approaches and processes and responsible partners to ensure quality in your project. If you plan to have any type of project evaluation, please describe its purpose and scope here.

- **C.7.3 What will be the general approach you will follow to communicate about your project?**

Who will coordinate project communication and how will he/she ensure the involvement of all partners? How will the communication function contribute to transfer your project results? Please note that all communication activities should be included in the work packages, as an integral part of your project. There is no need to repeat this information here.

- **C.7.4 How do you foresee the financial management of the project and reporting procedures for activities and budget (within the partnership and towards the programme)?**

Please define responsibilities, deadlines in financial flows, reporting flows, project related transfers, reclaims, etc.

- **C.7.5 Cooperation criteria**

The proposal must demonstrate the importance of the cross-border approach to the topic addressed. Please check the cooperation criteria and fill the column Description, when you should explain whether and how the project meets each of the cooperation criteria. You have to describe what the exact role of each partner organization is for each cooperation criteria.

- **C.7.6 Horizontal principles**

Please indicate which type of contribution to following horizontal principles applies to the project (positive effect, neutral or negative effect):

- Sustainable development as set out in Article 11 TFEU, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the "Do No Significant Harm" principle;
- Equal opportunities and non-discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
- Equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective.

Please describe and justify your choice. Please note that the coherence with the horizontal principles should be evident from the description of the project activities as well as Annexes A5 and A6.

C.8 Long-term plans

The Programme will support project that have a long-lasting effect in the territory and those who will benefit from it. In section C.8 of the AF the project partners should describe what will do to ensure this.

- **C.8.1 Ownership**

Please describe who will ensure the financial and institutional support for the outputs/deliverables developed by the project (e.g., tools), and explain how these outputs/deliverables will be integrated in the work of the institutions.

- **C.8.2 Durability**

Some outputs/deliverables should be used by relevant groups (project partners or others) after the project's lifetime, in order to have a lasting effect on the territory and the population. For example, green roofs or parks that have been built in urban areas need to be used by local authorities to maintain cleaner air in the city, while at the same time the whole population and the respective bird species will benefit from this investment. Please describe how your outputs/deliverables will be used after the project ends and by whom. Make sure that this information fully corresponds with the intervention logic of the project proposal (making reference with the result indicator RCR104).

- **C.8.3 Transferability**

Some outputs/deliverables that you will deliver could be adapted or further developed to be used by other target groups or in other territories. What will you do to make sure that relevant groups are aware of your outputs/deliverables and are able to use them?

- **C. 9. Additional information**

Please indicate how your project proposal will have a positive effect towards objectives of e-cohesion set in art. 69(8) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 with conjunction with Annex XIV.1 and Annex XIV.2 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

Please indicate how your project promotes the New European Bauhaus (NEB) principle to align project activities with the surrounding environment in order to provide for harmonious co-existence with nature, social inclusion and accessibility. The projects should ideally contribute to the regeneration of the environment and ecosystem functions and services, climate neutrality as well as the sustainable management and enhancement of cultural landscapes.

PART D - PROJECT BUDGET

D.1 Project budget per co-financing source (fund) - breakdown per partner

The table is filled automatically.

D.2 Project budget - overview per partner / per cost category

The table is filled automatically.

PART E - PROJECT LUMP SUMS AND UNIT COSTS

E.1 Project lump sums

Project lump sums table

In this table you can define your project lump sum. Please choose the applicable lump sum from the dropdown and allocate the lump sum cost to the Lead partner.

3 ANNEXES

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/electronically signed by all partners;
- A2. Partnership and co-financing statement** – signed, dated/electronically signed and provided by each partner;
- A3. Project Partner declaration** – signed, dated/ electronically signed and provided by each partner;
- A4. Declaration of e-mail address of the Lead Partner** – signed and dated/electronically signed by the Lead partner;
- A5. DNSH assessment** (template) - signed and dated/electronically signed by the Lead partner
- A6. Climate proofing assessment** (template *xlsx file) - signed and dated/electronically signed by the Lead partner (Please read carefully the Explanatory note on how to fill this document)
 - A6.1.** Explanatory note for climate proofing assessment – for information
- A7. State aid declaration** - signed, dated and stamped and provided by all partners
- A8. Justification of lump sums** - signed and dated/electronically signed by the respective partner.

⚡ IMPORTANT

All the annexes may be signed electronically with qualified electronic signatures. 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 assessment, selection and budget optimization 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 Annexes should be provided and submitted together with the Application form through the JEMS:

B1. Documentary evidence on the most recent **legal status** of all partners issued in the original language and English translation, stamped and signed/ verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) by respective organization and not older than **6 months prior** to the date of submission of the application- *only for partners from North Macedonia*. 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 (Agencies, Inspectorates, etc.).

In case of Subsidiary structure(s) of local/regional/national authorities situated in the eligible area acting as partner(s) – the respective act with assignment of the functioning of the unit in the definite territory is attached.

🔔 IMPORTANT

Legal status (Annex B1) is not required for the **municipalities** and **ministries** located on the territory of Republic of North Macedonia and for municipalities, **District governments and**

regional structures of the central government located on the territory of Republic of Bulgaria.

B2. Decision of the managing authority of the 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/verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy).

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.

In the cases where the executive authority is different from the collective managing body (i.e. Mayor and Municipal Council), the decision has to be taken by the second one.

NOTE

The Bulgarian partners that are **second-level budget administrators** (второстепенни разпоредители с бюджетни кредити) should present a **Letter of Support for implementation of the project** issued by the respective first level budget administrator (първостепенни разпоредители с бюджетни кредити).

B2.1 Legalized mandates of delegation from the legal representatives of partners (if applicable), in case the application form and/or the annexed declarations and/or project partnership agreement are not signed by the legal representatives of the Lead Partner/project partners. 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.

For investment activities (works and/or permanent installation of supply/equipment):

B3 All investment activities should be implemented on municipal or state-owned property:

B3.1– Ownership act or certificate or legal document for municipal or state-owned property, according to the national legislation, 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 translated into English. 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.

The presented document should prove that the respective project partner who will implement the investment activities is the owner/ owner of the acquired management rights for the respective property.

B3.2 – Consent of the owner (Decision of the Council/ Board, etc.)/ owner of the acquired management rights for the respective property, issued in the original language and translated into English signed and stamped by the respective partner, 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.

- The consent should be signed by the person/body with the decision-making authority (e.g. the Municipal Council, not the Mayor).
- Consent of the owner/ owner of the acquired management rights for the respective property should be presented notwithstanding that, the respective partner is the owner of the assets on which the investment activities will be implemented. Taking into account that the assets are owned by a partner who will implement the investment, the consent can be given in the same act (document) as the one containing the Decision for project development and implementation described in section B3.

In the case the project foresees purchase of supplies, that need to be permanently installed, the respective project partner who owns the property/acquired management rights for the respective property and will implement the investment activities, should submit consent of the owner for use of municipal or state-owned property for installation of equipment, 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 – in original language and English translation signed and stamped by the respective partner.

B4 – In case the investment activities require passing through private territories:

B4.1 – Consent of the owners, issued in original language and English translation signed and stamped by the respective partner.

B4.2 – Ownership act, issued in original language and English translation signed and stamped by the respective partner.

B5 – In case of investment activities within territories/objects with special status (environmental and architectural reserves, cultural monuments, etc.) **relevant document** (permits, approvals, certificates, statements, etc.) required by the respective national

applicable law:

B5.1 - issued by the competent national institution for Environment Protection

B5.2 – issued by the competent national institution for Culture Heritage Protection

in original language and English translation signed and stamped by the respective partner.

B6 – Positive Environmental Impact Assessment (positive opinion from the relevant body), required by the national legislation and issued in the original language and English translation signed and stamped by the respective partner or **Letter issued by the relevant body clearly stated that Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary**, issued in the original language and English translation signed and stamped by the respective partner/ verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy, if applicable according to the national legislation.

B6.1 Copy of letter issued by the relevant body clearly stating that the project proposal is in compliance with the current River Basin Management Plans and Flood risk management plans (issued in original language and English translation signed/ verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) or Statement by the relevant body that for the specific investment measures is not applicable – **for Bulgarian partners**.

B7. Documents related to works activities

I. In case of full project readiness - approved detailed investment projects for construction (project design in technical/working design phase) and valid Construction permit:

B7.1. Approved Detailed investment projects for construction (technical/working design phase) if applicable according to the national legislation,

or

Statement by the competent authority, which declares that the envisaged construction/repair works do not require approval of works design **and detailed Plans/Schemes** of the object/s of intervention - location, sizes, respective types of work, quantities etc. (issued in original language and English translation signed/verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy).

B7.2. Explanatory note as a part of the works design is presented – both in the original language and translation into English (signed and stamped by the respective partner);

B7.3. Detailed Bill of Quantities – (both in the original language and translation into English signed and stamped by the respective partner - scanned original in PDF format and in Excel format) signed and stamped by the designers with certificates of the respective professional

chambers and signed by the legal representative of project partner, who is the property owner / owner of the acquired management rights for the respective property. All items in the Bill of Quantities have to be specified in details and all unit prices and total price have to be pointed out. The amount of Bill of Quantities can be incorporated in BC 5 of the Application Form if it contains all the attributes described above. **If the amount in Bill of Quantities is presented in local currency, it must contain a separate column showing all unit rates and total prices in Euro, without VAT and with VAT included** (the conversion of the national currency into Euro should be made according to the exchange rate published on the web site of the EC for the month, during which the document is prepared: <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/inforeuro/index.cfm?language=en>).

B7.4. Valid Construction permit for each partner envisaging construction works (if applicable according to the national legislation)- issued in original language and English translation signed/ verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) or **Statement** by the competent authority, which declares that the envisaged Construction permit do not require (the statement issued in original language and English translation verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy).

NB! In case of project readiness (approved project design), valid Construction permit must be provided in 45 calendar days term from the receipt of the notification about the Decision of the MC for financing of the project.

II. In case of readiness in „Conceptual design“ phase – agreed/approved investment projects (project design):

B7.5. Investment projects (project design) in „Conceptual design“ phase if applicable according to the national legislation,

or

Statement by the competent authority, which declares that the envisaged construction/repair works do not require approval of works design and detailed Plans/Schemes of the object/s of intervention - location, sizes, respective types of work, quantities etc. (issued in original language and English translation signed/verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy).

B7.6. Explanatory note in „Conceptual design“ phase as a part of the works design is

presented – both in the original language and translation into English (signed and stamped by the respective partner).

B7.7. Bill of Quantities in „Conceptual design“ phase – (both in the original language and translation into English signed and stamped by the respective partner - scanned original in PDF format and in Excel format) signed and stamped by the designers with certificates of the respective professional chambers and signed by the legal representative of project partner, as well as the property owner/ owner of the acquired management rights for the respective property. The items in the Bill of Quantities have to be specified in unit prices and total price have to be pointed out. The amount of Bill of Quantities can be incorporated in BC 5 of the Application Form if it contains all the attributes described above. If the amount in Bill of Quantities is presented in local currency, it must contain a separate column showing all unit rates and total prices in Euro, without VAT and with VAT included (the conversion of the national currency into Euro should be made according to the exchange rate published on the web site of the EC for the month, during which the document is prepared: <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/infoeuro/index.cfm?language=en>).

B7.8. Valid Construction permit issued on the approved project design in „Conceptual design“ phase for each partner envisaging construction works (if applicable according to the national legislation) - issued in original language and English translation signed/ verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) or **Statement** by the competent authority, which declares that the envisaged Construction permit do not require (the statement issued in original language and English translation verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy).

NB! The submission of valid Construction permit issued on the approved project design in „Conceptual design“ phase, at the application stage is optional. In case of approved project design in „Conceptual design“ phase, valid Construction permit will be required/provided in 45 calendar days term from the receipt of the notification about the Decision of the MC for financing of the project.

🔔 IMPORTANT

For partners from Bulgaria:

- **The investment activities, which do not require approval of project design**, are defined in Article 147 (1) of the Bulgarian Spatial Development Act (SDA);
- **The Approved project design in „technical/working design phase“ (технически/работен проект)** according to Article 139 (1), p.2 and p.3 of the SDA **shall be**

agreed and approved under Articles 144 and 145 of SDA.

- The investment projects (project design) in „Conceptual design“phase (идеен проект) according to Article 139 (1), p.1 of the SDA shall be agreed/approved under Article 141 of SDA/ Article 142 (2) of SDA.

For partners from North Macedonia:

- The Investment activities that do not require a building permit are defined in Article 73 of the Law on Building (Закон за градење).

🔔 IMPORTANT

Please note that **lack of approved project design (conceptual design “phase” or “technical/working design phase”) or the respective Statement by the competent authority is a reason for direct elimination** without possibility for additional supplementations.

In case of Supply of equipment:

- **B8.1 Technical specification for supplies** (in English, signed and stamped/verified with qualified electronic signatures by the respective partner) – the detailed specification should be clear enough for determination of the seeking deliverables;
- **B8.2 Detailed Plans/Schemes** for positioning the delivered equipment, located outdoors in public spaces, as well as equipment in indoor spaces, approved by competent authority, according to the national legislation (when applicable),
B8.3 Explanatory note – both in the original language and translation into English (signed and stamped by the respective partner)

and respective

B8.4 Valid Permit for Installation/Building (applicable according to the national legislation, issued in original language and English translation signed and stamped/verified with qualified electronic signature by respective organization as true copy) **or Statement** by the competent authority, which declares that the envisaged Permit for installation/building do not require.

NB! The submission of valid Permit for Installation/Building at the application stage is optional. In case of full project readiness (approved works design), valid Permit for Installation/Building will be required/provided in 45 calendar days term from the receipt of the notification about the Decision of the MC for financing of the project.

- **B8.5 Market analysis** for the planned supply - done either by asking for offers from at least three providers or by print screen (and indicating the websites) out the price offers for the specific items from the web pages of at least three providers or prints from national systems on public procurements, or an independent evaluation of the cost. **The expenditures included in the budget based on the above market analysis shall be an average of the price offers received**, issued in the original language and English translation signed by respective organization as true copy

📌 NOTE

Please note that **trademarks and models must not be indicated** in Technical specifications!

📌 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 assessment and budget optimization.

3.3 Documents for information (C)

The following documents are provided for information only:

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

4 How to Submit the Application

📌 IMPORTANT

The project proposal must be submitted entirely in electronic form using the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS).

No paper submission of documentation is required under this Call for Proposals.

Detailed instructions for access to the electronic system and submission of project proposal are provided in Attachment 3 “Instruction for electronic submission of project proposals in JEMS” to these Guidelines for Applicants.

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).

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).

5 Deadline for Receipt of Applications

📌 IMPORTANT

The deadline for submission of the Project proposal in **Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS)** is **15th of September 2023, 23:59 h East European time.**

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

5.5 Assessment and Selection of Applications

The detailed information about the assessment and selection process of the submitted applications is provided in **Attachment 3** to these Guidelines for applicants.

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.

6 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 is presented in Annex C to these Guidelines for Applicants.

INDICATIVE SCHEDULE FOR SELECTION AND CONTRACTING OF THE PROJECT PROPOSALS	
Type of procedure	Term for implementation*
Administrative compliance and eligibility check	Up to 1 months after the deadline for submission of project proposals
Technical and Quality assessment of project proposals	Up to 2 months publication of the results from Administrative compliance and eligibility check
Pre-contracting procedures	Documentary check of presence/lack of double financing, check for compliance with state-aid rules and performance of on-the-spot visits on the investment projects preliminary approved for funding by MC.
Contracting	Up to 1 month after approval of the project proposals/Pre-contracting report by the MC

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