

Interreg IPA CBC

Italy–Albania–Montenegro Programme

**FIVE GOOD REASONS FOR
STRENGTHENING MARITIME CROSS-
BORDER COOPERATION 2020+**

*Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro contribution to
the debate on the future programming period*

18 APRIL 2018



The Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro key facts and figures

Programme eligible area: 66.365 km²

Programme population: 7.805.809 inhabitants

Eligible area:

Italy:

PUGLIA REGION: provinces of Bari, BAT Barletta-Andria-Trani, Brindisi, Foggia, Lecce, Taranto

MOLISE REGION: provinces of Campobasso and Isernia

Albania:

The entire country

Montenegro:

The entire country



4 PRIORITY AXES:

- 1. Strengthening the cross-border cooperation and competitiveness of SMEs*
- 2. Smart management of natural and cultural heritage for the exploitation of cross border sustainable tourism and territorial attractiveness*
- 3. Environment protection, risk management and low carbon strategy*
- 4. Increasing cross-border accessibility, promoting sustainable transport service and facilities and improving public infrastructures*

Total budget:

EUR 92,707,558.00

Co-financing:

Instrument for Pre-accession (IPA) at a rate of 85%

Introduction

The main objective of this discussion paper is to provide useful inputs to all stakeholders concerned by the future of the territorial cooperation, in particular of the maritime and Interreg IPA cross-border cooperation between Member States and Pre-Accession Countries. This is a contribution by the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme to the on-going debate on the 2021–2027 programming period. This does not represent the official position of any specific institution or country, but it reflects on the practice of programme managers.

This discussion paper builds on the work of the Interreg Italy-France Maritime Programme, which is acknowledged and used as a basis. This paper was developed by the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat, as well as it was discussed by the Members of the Programme Joint Monitoring Committee meeting in Podgorica on 18 April 2018, which strongly support its key messages.

Accordingly, the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro joins the Italy-France Maritime programme in the intention to fill in a gap of the "Cross Border Review" launched by the EC in 2015, in which obstacles to cross-border cooperation were analysed only for terrestrial borders, thus neglecting maritime borders. In addition, the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro would like to stress some of the specificities of the cooperation with Pre-Accession countries. While doing this, also the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro would like to provide arguments adding to those of the Cross-Border Review and to the Interreg Italy-France Maritime Programme, that demonstrate the need for Interreg IPA and maritime cross-border cooperation after 2020. This in addition to and to complement the transnational sea basin cooperation, also while counteracting the tendency of on-going 2020+ debate to completely exclude bilateral maritime cooperations in favour of wider sea basin perspectives.

Moreover, the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro would like to stress how cross-border maritime cooperation also provides for strong synergies with the EU macro-regions. In particular, the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro widely builds on and contribute to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, as all its priorities and most, if not all, projects are already aligned with and contribute to the goals of the Strategy. At the same time, the cross-border cooperation allows to focus on the specificities of a single maritime border within the Adriatic-Ionian sea basin, thus complementing the EUSAIR.

All in all, the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro joins the Interreg Italy-France Maritime Programme in formulating 'recommendations' for the future of cross-border maritime cooperation out of the "five good reasons" identified.



1ST GOOD REASON:

JOINTLY MANAGING MARITIME RISKS AND MARITIME ENVIRONMENT



The obstacle

Natural and man-made hazards do not know national borders. The challenge of the maritime border makes it extremely difficult for local and national authorities to jointly assess and mitigate risks, as well as to cooperate in case of disasters, which threaten countries sharing a single maritime border.

The maritime cross-border environment is fragile and exposed to risks such as coastal erosion, floods, fire risk, oil spilling, emergencies at sea, etc. More generally, the maritime environment and the water is a common resource, which needs to be preserved together. All of these challenges may be only faced together.



The added value

Only cross-border cooperation may:

- make it possible for the authorities of few countries to cooperate on concrete projects, such as on common infrastructures, facilities and procedures, more efficiently than among several countries of the entire sea basin;
- make it possible for a limited number of authorities to effectively share risks and disaster management structures,
- strengthening a more rational and joint use of management and water resources;
- raise awareness of stakeholders about the need to prevent disasters jointly across a maritime border;
- set up joint monitoring tools of natural and man-made risks, such as early warning systems;
- create networks of authorities in charge of maritime safety, for exchanging good practices and building knowledge of the operators;
- develop joint protocols and common practices for the protection of the maritime environment;
- develop common facilities and procedures for the low-carbon economy, including common energy efficiency plans and regulations;
- facilitate joint management of energy and digital networks, focused on only two or few countries, more effectively than for a whole sea basin.



The projects

Some illustrative examples from the 2014-2020 Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro programme for this topic: The project 3 WATCH OUT improves the management of natural risks in the cross-border areas between Italy, Albania and Montenegro, from risk prevention to cooperation in case of disasters project, but also the project FLAT, which strengthens capacities of rescue services and creates integrated risk management plans in case of floods and landslides affecting the cross-border area. ADRINET improves management of marine resources, while combining the efforts of scientists, decision-makers, fishermen and citizens of the cross-border area. In the same way, the project BLUE LAND improves the protection of the coastal environment and water landscapes of the cross-border area through new management models, involving institutions, businesses, scientists and citizens. In the low-carbon sector, the project REEHUB increases energy efficiency of public buildings of the cross-border area, through a network of hubs, where building managers are trained on energy-efficiency measures.



2ND GOOD REASON:

MAKING CROSS-BORDER MARITIME AREAS MORE ACCESSIBLE



The obstacle

To overcome the obstacle of the maritime border is a huge challenge as such. Even more in the Southern Adriatic cross-border area between Italy, Albania and Montenegro:

- many areas are scarcely accessible, especially some coastal areas and their mainland. Key linkages between major cities, as well as between key transport hubs and inland areas are either missing, or lagging behind, or available only during some seasons;
- Maritime linkages to TEN-T networks nodes, as well as inland areas' access to TEN-T nodes, are also still missing;
- administrative and legal instruments, enabling these areas to overcome this major obstacle are lagging behind.



The added value

Only cross-border cooperation may:

- allow countries sharing a cross-border maritime area to cooperate on transport routes connecting only two-three countries, in the planning and implementing phase, thus complementing transport links set at EU or Sea Basin level;
- establishing the legal setting for sharing common bilateral or trilateral transport facilities for goods and passengers, more effectively than among many countries of the same sea basin;
- develop a new conceptual dimension of territorial continuity, across countries sharing a common sea, which complements the national dimension;
- enable a joint bilateral or trilateral planning by local institutions of the countries concerned, for new and improved multi-modal cross-border connections, in compliance with State Aid rules and TEN-T linkages, as well as establishing missing maritime links to TEN-T nodes;
- enable testing of pilot actions to increase cross-border accessibility between two or three countries (maritime and air links).



The projects

Some illustrative examples from the 2014-2020 Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro programme for this topic: The ON CLOUD NINE project has the ambitious objective to increase the accessibility in the region, especially through new direct air links between two countries of the cross-border area, while tackling also the connections to the air hubs. The project SAGOV enables local and national authorities of the cross-border area to coordinate the planning of passengers and freight transport routes within the cross-border area, while the project PORTS paves the way to new transport links for passengers and goods between key harbours of the cross-border area.



3RD GOOD REASON:

JOINTLY ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF MARITIME AREAS



The obstacle

The cross-border dimension of small-medium enterprises (SMEs) in the maritime sector and in all sectors connected to economy of the maritime area is not yet sufficiently exploited as opportunity for joint growth of the territories. Also here the maritime border makes it more difficult for SMEs to fully take advantage of these opportunities. The Southern Adriatic, in the framework of wider Sea Basin area, has a great potential, especially for the growth of blue and green technologies, as it is demonstrated by increasing cross-border investments by the SMEs. Joint measures in favour of the local economy, thus contrasting unemployment and migration of younger population are needed in this cross-border maritime areas.



The added value

Only through cooperation small-medium enterprises of the area may effectively joint forces to face the challenges of globalization and may lead to sustainable economic growth for the area. In this way, they may attract investments and create job opportunities, while supporting young people, who want to stay in the area.

Only the cross-border cooperation may:

- enable cooperation of public authorities and civil society organisations on concrete facilities and support services for SMEs across one single maritime border, more effectively than among many countries of the same sea basin;
- promote cooperation and cross-fertilisation of small-medium enterprises, especially in the blue economy and on innovative sectors (e.g. maritime biotechnologies, nautical tourism, diversified touristic offer, agro-food technologies, health care, social innovation, etc.);
- supporting cooperation among authorities responsible for vocational training of two or few countries, in order to enhance capacity building and exchange of good practice;
- Enhance SMEs internationalization through innovative cross-border services;
- Support the cross-border touristic sector, while valorizing natural and cultural sites of the cross-border area.



The projects

Some examples from the 2014-2020 Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro programme for this topic: The project FILA improves the efficiency and innovation of agro-food micro and small-medium enterprises of the cross-border area, which have common challenges and potentials, while creating fertile cooperation between scientists, institutions and enterprises. The project INNOTOURCLUST improves the capacity of businesses and institutions of this area to attract and fidelise tourists, through new services, innovative products and cooperation opportunities. The project WISHFUL develops new and common targeted touristic services, as well as health care services for tourists with special needs in the cross-border area. REGLPORTS promotes year-long tourism in the cross-border area, while developing a broader nautical tourism offer.



4TH GOOD REASON:

MAKING THE MOST OF THE COMMON CULTURAL ROOTS



The obstacle

Maritime borders are not only a physical barrier, but even more a mindset obstacle, even though common cultural roots strongly connect the two sides of the Southern Adriatic. Crossing the maritime border to meet and cooperate does not always happen automatically, it needs more time, energy, therefore more funding. Even though younger generations are more mobile, the cultural and linguistic barriers still divide countries sharing a common maritime border.



The added value

Only cross-border maritime cooperation may;

- facilitate sharing of a joint cultural assets and common cultural roots, in order to strengthen the common cultural identity, which is more effective between two countries sharing a single border, than within a larger sea basin area;
- create joint cultural routes in the Southern Adriatic are, which may enhance linkages of the cross-border maritime areas and make them recognizable within the wider Sea Basin areas;
- test a joint management of the very rich common material and immaterial cultural heritage by public and private actors, in order to make it more accessible;
- valorize and take advantage of the common roots and traditions, which are evident in the Southern Adriatic area, where populations have always been mobile and several communities still keep the linguistic and cultural traditions of the country of origin on the other side of the Adriatic.



The projects

Some examples from the 2014-2020 Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro programme for this topic: The project COMPLICITIES exploits the creative potential of suburbs of cities in the cross-border area, while involving local communities in the development of innovative solutions for urban regeneration and social innovation. The project MONET improves the management of museums in the cross-border area, in order to fully exploit their cultural and touristic potential, while the project ADNICH improves the exploitation of the rich cultural heritage of the cross-border area, through joint theater productions, for the benefit of tourists and locals. The project CIRCE increases the cooperation among audio-visual actors, through joint productions, in order to better exploit the great potential of creative industries and common cultural roots of the cross-border area.



5TH GOOD REASON:

GETTING READY FOR JOINING THE EUROPEAN UNION



The obstacle

Besides the natural and cultural barriers, which naturally go together with a maritime border, on the borders between Member States and Pre-Accession countries there is also an administrative barrier, connected to the still different administrative settings of non-EU countries, being currently adapted to the laws and administrative practices of the European Union, in view of accession. The adoption of the *acquis communautaire* connected to the cohesion policy is a key part of the accession exercise. This barrier is evident not only in the different written rules, but also in the unwritten administrative approaches, mainly due to different institutional and political setting of the recent and less recent history.



The added value

The Interreg IPA CBC programmes widely contribute to a big change for the legal, administrative and mind set of the institutions cooperating, both in the Member States, learning how specific issues are solved by the neighbours of the other side of the border, and in the Pre-Accession Countries, which may get a first-hand knowledge and experience of how the European Union works in practice.

Only cooperation may:

- Make the concerned public authorities aware of the practical implications of the legal and regulatory framework of cohesion policy and thus prepare them for accession, in the case of IPA countries or improve the efficiency of existing procedures, in case of MSs;
- Allow the testing of administrative practices and approaches in the day-to-day implementation of programmes and projects;
- Support the authorities in setting up the management and control structures foreseen in the ESI regulations;
- Contribute to the alignment of the national legal and administrative systems with the EU rules;
- Enable EU Countries Authorities to improve their administrative capacities, while becoming aware of the practices of the neighbouring countries.



The projects

Some examples from the 2014-2020 Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro programme for this topic: The entire programme management, i.e. the Technical Assistance projects, has a primary side effect to enable the Institutions of IPA countries to adapt to the rules and practices of the management of EU funds, such as for example:

- The alignment of IPA CBC rules with the ERDF rules applicable to Interreg programmes;
- The close cooperation and joint responsibility of the Joint Monitoring Committee;
- The set-up of management and control systems in the IPA countries, in line with the EU rules;
- The subsidiary responsibility of the IPA Countries for beneficiaries, failing to deliver and in recovering irregular expenditures.

Moreover, some projects effectively support IPA countries to adopt EU rules, such as the BRE project, which result is the adoption of EU standard and electronic company registers in the IPA countries or the project 3C4SME, which facilitates the access to credit to SMEs in the IPA countries through the future introduction of a cooperative guarantee instrument, successfully tested in the EU Member State.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Because of a full alignment of the cross-border cooperation programmes with the goals of the **EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)**, these programmes may widely contribute to the EUSAIR. Both the EUSAIR and the cross-border cooperation programme mutually benefit from each other, the one gaining financing opportunities in a cooperation context, the other gaining more strategic dimension in programming and in project development.

In addition, the cross-border/bilateral dimension may complement the sea basin dimension for all EUSAIR pillars, e.g. making the region more connected not only for the sea basin transport TEN-T routes, but also for cross-border routes; strengthening the blue growth, while exploiting the potential of existing bilateral economic interconnections; enabling effective management of natural and man-made risks and cooperation in case of disasters more effectively for few countries than a transnational area; exploiting the full potential also of common cultural roots shared by only two or few countries of the same sea basin.

2. **Common answers and solutions** are necessary to overcome obstacles, which are specific for the maritime areas, both at Sea Basin / transnational level and within smaller cross-border areas, in relation to:

- accessibility of the territories;
- management of man-made and natural maritime risk;
- difficult cooperation in taking advantage of the blue and green growth opportunities, due to maritime border;
- strengthening of the common cultural roots of the cross-border maritime areas;
- adaptation to the EU rules and practice for the pre-accession countries.

These joint solutions may be only effectively developed if cooperation is promoted and specifically financed through cross-border maritime cooperation. Therefore, the added value of cross-border maritime cooperation needs to be acknowledged as a key aspect for European Territorial Cooperation 2021 – 2027, as well as continuity of the financial allocation needs to be ensured.

3. The effectiveness of the joint solutions to overcome obstacles for maritime cooperation may only be reached in the definition of **geographic cooperation areas**, which take also stock of current successful cooperation networks, as well as of social, economic, cultural and environmental interconnections of the **cross-border functional areas**.

Therefore, the future geography of European Territorial Cooperation, and thus of the future Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro, shall be based on objective relevance of joint obstacles/challenges and cooperation opportunities of a cross-border area, rather than artificial criteria such as the distance of the coastlines.

However, if the sea-basin dimension becomes the guiding principle for maritime cooperation, the Regulation shall:

- during the programming of sea-basin maritime programmes, including in the ex-ante evaluation, still provide for a compulsory analysis of the specific cross-border / bilateral cooperation gaps, challenges and potentials, while involving the sub-national governance structures at NUTS II or III levels, in order to identify within the sea-basin maritime programme specific cross-border priorities and interventions for cross-border sub-areas;
- during the implementation of sea-basin maritime programmes, make it possible for two or more countries and Regions to have dedicated project selection procedures and evaluations for the sub-area, focused on the priorities and interventions identified during programming, and at the same time to keep effective cross-border structures, in charge of supporting cooperation of regional and local actors of the sub-area.

Picture on page 2: Titled «Suture», courtesy of the young artist Giulio Ribezzo (woolen threads bind together the two edges of the Adriatic, symbol of cooperation networks that weave culture, heritage and identity into a common vision)

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