

**Cross-Border
Cooperation**



Funded by
the European Union

North Macedonia – Albania

**EU-funded Cross-Border “People to people cross-border activities” in the
eligible area of the IPA III Cross-Border Cooperation Programme
North Macedonia and Albania**

Rules of Contest

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1. Background

The IPA Cross-Border Programme North Macedonia - Albania is implemented jointly by both beneficiaries' countries Republic of North Macedonia and Republic of Albania since 2009. In the Republic of North Macedonia, the responsible institution for implementation of this Programme is the Ministry of Local Self Government (MoLSG), whilst in Republic of Albania, the responsible institution is the "State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination" (SASPAC). Both countries are responsible for the overall coordination of the Programme. The contracting authority is the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of North Macedonia on behalf of the EU Commission, which is responsible for all contracts and payment issues (CA). The programme's implementation is overseen by a Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) comprised of representatives from the institutions of both participating countries.

The CA, the CBCSs and the JMC are assisted by the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) based in Struga, North Macedonia with an antenna office in Elbasan, Albania. The JTS is the administrative body responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme including support and advice to potential applicants as well as grant beneficiaries.

The objective of this cross-border programmes is to promote good neighbourly relations, foster stability, security and prosperity, which is in the mutual interest of both countries, and encourage their harmonious, balanced and sustainable development.

To some extent, the cross-border programme introduced some new and innovative actions at border where the frequency of people and goods is not very high. Due to the history of the countries and the mountainous feature of the border region, this particular programme is not building on an old tradition of partnerships and joint initiatives.

Despite the programme's remarkable achievements in priority areas such as environmental protection and economic development through the promotion of tourism, its overarching objectives including fostering broader neighbourly relations among residents and strengthening cooperation between institutions and organisations not directly involved in

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current priority projects remain insufficiently developed. In this context, “people-to-people actions” aim to address this gap by enhancing the programme’s inclusiveness and increasing its overall impact in the area where it is implemented. .

To this regard both Cross border cooperation structures (CBCSs) have designed this activity within the framework of the current Technical Assistance (TA) of the CBC programme in a way that will support funding of the “Small CBC initiatives in the programme area”, such as cross border competitions / conferences among the pupils (students), institutions, organisations, municipalities from both sides of the borders in topics which are relevant for them in the CBC Programme eligible area organized by different, organizations such as schools, universities, membership-based organization, CSO, municipalities, etc. established either in North Macedonia or Albania. Other CBC activities as joint initiatives taken by institutions and organizations from both border areas, are also welcomed to participate under this Call.

The costs of organizing such cbc activities / events / conferences among partners from both countries that will contribute to strengthening cooperation, reconciliation, and restoring good neighborly relations will be covered by the Technical Assistance of the IPA 3 CBC programme North Macedonia - Albania.

2. Eligible Area

The territory of the eligible areas in the two countries is almost equivalent¹.

The small CBC initiatives in both countries should be conducted within the programme eligible area which covers respectively three regions and their municipalities in each country. The cross -border area of the Republic of Macedonia includes the regions of Pelagonia, Southwest and Polog and the three bordering regions in Albania are regions of Dibra, Elbasan and Korça.

The municipalities covered by the programme in MK, are as follows:

- Bitola, DemirHisar, Dolneni, Krivogastani, Krusevo, Mogila, Novaci, Prilep, and Resen;
- Bogovinje, Brvenica, Gostivar, Jegunovce, Mavrovo and Rostusa, Tearce, Tetovo, Vrapciste and Zelino;
- CentarZupa, Debar, Debarca, Kicevo, Makedonski Brod, Ohrid, Plasnica, Struga and Vevcani.

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¹ <https://ipacbc-mk-al.eu/programme1/eligible-area.html>

The municipalities covered by the programme in AL, are as follows:

- Elbasan, Cërrik, Gramsh, Librazhd, Peqin, Belsh and Prrenjas, • Korçë, Maliq, Pustec, Pogradec, Kolonjë and Devoll; and
- Dibër, Bulqizë, Mat and Klos.

3. Objective

The Cross-Border Cooperation Structures (CBCSs) of this CBC programme aim to promote good neighbourly relations, foster regional integration, stability, security, and prosperity, and support the socio-economic development of both countries through the implementation of the IPA CBC Programme between the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania.

In line with this objective, the CBCSs under this programme will launch a call for proposals for “**people-to-people cbc actions.**”

Projects or initiatives awarded under this Call, intended for legal entities from both countries such as municipalities, schools, universities, institutions established by municipalities, NGOs, SCOs, etc. implementing small cross-border initiatives in the programme area, including cross-border competitions, conferences, and seminars, will have **part of the costs incurred during the implementation of these initiatives covered.** (*The sports activities are excluded from this contest.*)

Eligibility

To be eligible, the submitted applications / entries under this call must fulfil the following characteristics:

1. Support implementation of the People – to – People CBC initiatives/ in the programme CBC area.

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2. Activities must be in line with the objectives of the CBC programme North Macedonia and Albania as well as with the objective of the cross-border cooperation (see point 3 above);
3. The activities will be carried out within the programme CBC area.
4. Applicants must be effectively established in either North Macedonia or Albania, countries.
5. Each contest / application must be developed and implemented at least by two partners (one from North Macedonia and one from Albania; number of partners is limited to four (4))

For more information regarding the IPA III CBC Programme North Macedonia – Albania (2021-2027), please visit the following webpages: <http://ipacbc-mk-al.eu>; www.mls.gov.mk; www.saspac.gov.al.

Types of small “People to people” CBC initiatives

The “Small CBC initiatives in the programme cbc area”, can be cross border competitions / conferences among the pupils (students) from both side of the borders in Mathematics, English, Physic, Chemistry, Music, AI and any other CBC, people-to-people actions among the schools, universities, CSO/ NGOs, municipalities, regional government units, institutions and organizations founded by local governments from the CBC Programme area, that can promote good neighbourly relations . *(Sports activities are excluded from this contest).*

6. Award criteria

The applications / entries under this call of the “**People to people” CBC initiatives**” will be selected according to the following criteria that will be assessed by an independent evaluation committee established by the CBCs and a representative of the Delegation of the European Union in MK, as observer of the process:

1. Demonstration of the CBC dimension / character.
2. Originality and replicability.
3. Impact and benefit.

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5. Evaluation process

An evaluation committee will appraise the quality of the submitted applications and recommend to the CBCSs the final applicants to be financed (some of the project costs to be covered).

At the evaluation phase, the members of the evaluation committee will individually assess each submitted application against the award criteria and will then mark as a group each of them up to a maximum number of 60 points.

The independent experts of the evaluation committee will evaluate each application against the three award criteria and score them as follows:

Criterion	Threshold ²	Max points
1. Demonstration of the CBC dimension / character- Joint implementation of activities by partners resulting in the intensification of cross-border links and sustainable crossborder partnerships and/or the removal of cross-border obstacles to sustainable socio-economic development”	10	20
2. Originality and replicability - The extent to which the idea is innovative, original and a first-of-a-kind in the domain of application. The description should be clear, logically presented and well-illustrated.	10	20
3. Impact and benefit - promote good neighbourly relations, foster stability, security and prosperity, which is in the mutual interest of both countries.	10	20
Total	30	60

Upon completion of this work, the members of the evaluation committee shall sign a record of all the applications examined, containing an assessment of their quality and identifying the selected applications / initiatives to be financed.

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Only contestants scoring a minimum of 30 points will be considered eligible for support of their project activities

The selected candidates will have to provide proof of eligibility, which will be presented to the evaluation committee for evaluation of applications.

The awarded projects or initiatives may be implemented during the period of this Technical Assistance, but no later than 20 of May 2028.

Applications/initiatives dealing with an irrelevant subject or containing vulgar, defamatory, violent, racist, sexist or discriminatory content, or any other content deemed by the evaluation committee to be inappropriate for the tone of the competition, will be excluded.

Participation in this Call for people-to-people activities, including selection to be financed, in no manner constitutes an endorsement or support by the CBCSs, of the views presented by the contestants in the entries submitted to the competition.

6. Submission of papers and timetable

To take part in the contest, CfP candidates must complete the application form that can be downloaded from the following webpages:

<http://ipacbc-mk-al.eu>; www.mls.gov.mk; www.saspac.gov.al

Applicants / Contestants can submit a maximum of 2 entries or applications, but they shall be aware that they can be awarded only one contract in this contest. Formally speaking, the applications are submitted only by one legal entity, which could do this on behalf of a group of applicants / partners or legal entities. When the applicant is a legal entity, the names of all the partners who participated in drafting the application have to be declared in the application. Written consent authorization / mandate of applicant by all entries must be supplied together with the application.

Applications will need to be submitted by email, to the following e-mail:
jts.mk_al2009@yahoo.com.

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The deadline for submission of entries is 17th of April 2026 as evidenced by the date of dispatch in the email. Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

Applicants are kindly requested to carefully read and abide by the instructions contained in the application form. The submitted documents must be readable, accessible and printable. Incomplete entries may be considered inadmissible if essential elements are missing. Contestants must display their signature wherever required (e.g. declaration).

By entering this Call for people-to-people initiatives, each applicant /contestant is deemed to accept these rules. Contestants agree to abide by and be bound by the competition rules and the decisions of the evaluation committee, which are final in all matters related to the contest.

The following timetable displays important dates in the calendar of this contest:

	Date
1. Info sessions on both sides of the border	During March / April 2026
2. Deadline for submission of entries (application forms)	17.04.2026
3. Notification of award contracts, along with information to contestants on opening, administrative check and eligibility check (submitted proofs / valid supporting documents)	30.05.2026
4. Publication of the list of awarded contracts	30.06.2026
4. Payment of the cost incurred (during and after organization of the activity according to the presented documents / invoices)	2026/2027/2028

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7. Amount of the awarded contract

The contracting authority will not award a grant to the successful contestants, but will cover all the cost that will be incurred with the implementation of the activities, according to the submitted documents for payments made (invoices for transport, accommodation, competition hall / room, refreshments, fiscal bills for the small costs paid in cash and so on, up to the amount determined in the awarded contract). These types of awarded contracts will be provided for the lead applicant / contestant.

8. Conditions for cancellation of the contest

The CBCSs, have the right to terminate this Call before its closing date without any obligation to indemnify contestants due to reasons of force majeure³.

The CBCSs have the right to decide not to award any contract if no applications / entries are received or if the contest evaluation committee did not award any contract (e.g. when no contestant obtained at least 30 points in total) or the best contestant is not eligible or must be excluded.

9. Conditions for participation

The contestant's application must not have previously received any other funded contract that is the subject of the current competition. For that purpose, the contestant must sign a statement declaring that has not received previously any other funding for the application. All information given by the contestant in the application must be correct and complete.

9.1. Eligibility criteria of applicants / testers

Applicants / Contestants for the shall comply with the following eligibility criteria to participate:

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1. The lead applicant can be legal and natural persons either from North Macedonia or Albania
2. When the applicant is a legal person, it must be one of the following types of legal persons:
Private or public institution (schools, universities, NGOs, CSA, municipalities, chamber of commerce ...the list is not exhausted)

9.2. Exclusion criteria

Entries / applications submitted either by natural persons or drafted by authors under a legal entity who work in operating structures or Joint Technical Secretariats involved in the management of the IPA III CBC programme are ineligible to safeguard the impartiality of the evaluation and prevent access to confidential information by potential contesters prior to the launch of the contest.

9.3. Liability of contestants

Neither the European Commission nor the consortium members of the CBCSs may be held responsible for any claim relating to the activities carried out in the framework of the contest by the contestant.

Neither the European Commission nor the consortium members of the OSs shall be held liable for any damage caused or sustained by any of the contestants, including any damage caused to third parties as a consequence of or during the implementation of the activities related to the contest.

9.4. Checks and audits

The contesters / applicant accepts that, if they are awarded, the European Commission, OLAF and the Court of Auditors may carry out checks and audits in relation to the contest and the awarded contract.

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9.5. Publicity

The contesters / applicants accept, if they are awarded, to promote their activities, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner.

Unless the European Commission requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any communication activity related to the small / People to people cbc initiatives (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.) must:

- (a) Display the EU flag and emblem of the Ministry of Local Self Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and the SASPAC of the Republic of Albania.
- (b) include the following text: *‘This action has been awarded the EU-funded contract for people – to - people cross-border cooperation activities in the IPA CBC programme North Macedonia - Albania, managed by the CBCSs’*

When displayed together with another logo, the EU emblem must have appropriate prominence. For the purposes of his or her obligations, the awarded contracts may use the EU flag with first obtaining approval from the Delegation of the European Commission in MK. This does not, however, give the right to exclusive use. Moreover, the awarded contracts may not appropriate the EU flag or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means.

By the European Commission and the CBCSs

The European Commission and the CBCSs may use for its communication and publicizing activities, information relating to the small cbc initiatives for non-profit publications and public deliverables as well as any other material, such as pictures or audiovisual material that it receives from the winner (including in electronic form).

The CBCSs will publish the name of the winner, its locality, the amount of the support and its nature and purpose. The applicants / contesters may request the CBCSs or the European Commission to waive such publication if disclosure risks threatening its security and safety or harm its commercial interest.

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Before publishing information regarding the contract awarded in any other magazine or publicity, the winner must previously inform the CBCSs or the European Commission. However, the publication must be done in accordance with the EU visibility rules.

10. Personal data

Registration and submission of applications /entries shall be made by electronic means (as specified in the rules of the contest), provided that it is non-discriminatory in nature and ensures integrity, confidentiality and protection of personal data. All personal data contained in the application form shall be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L8 of 12.01.2001, p1) on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Such data shall be processed by the Controller solely in connection with the implementation and follow-up of the application of the winner, without prejudice to a possible transmission to the bodies in charge of a monitoring or inspection task in accordance with European Community and European Union legislation.

Applicants / Contesters may, on written request, gain access to their personal data and correct any information that is inaccurate or incomplete. They should address any questions regarding the processing of their personal data to the Controller, via the contact person announced in the rules of the contest.

Applicants / Contesters may, at any time, lodge a complaint against the processing of their personal data with the European Data Protection Supervisor.

The European Commission and the CBCSs shall be authorized to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- The name of awarded contracts(s).
- The locality of awarded contracts (s).
- The general purpose of the activities of the awarded contracts (s) in relation to the contracts, in the form of a summary provided by the awarded contracts(s).
- The amount of the support awarded.

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11. Language of the procedure and application

All communication related to this contest will be held in English language. Furthermore, only entries drafted in English language will be eligible for awarding contracts. Supporting documents to prove the eligibility of the contestant will be acceptable in any of the official languages of both beneficiaries' countries.

12. Ethics

The activities must be carried out in compliance with:

- (a) ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity as set out, for instance, in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity⁴ and including, in particular, avoiding fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other research misconduct) and
- (b) applicable international, EU and national law.

13. Contact

If the contestants have any questions regarding the contest, the information processed in the context of the contest, or their rights, they are welcome to contact the CBCSs at the following email address: **jts.mk_al2009@yahoo.com**;

When for the purpose of drafting the application, the contestant deems that he or she will need data from CBC grant contracts (either implemented or under course), he or she should

address the contracting authority who signed those contracts for the specific CBC programme. The name and contact of this contracting authority can be requested at the following email address: **jts.mk_al2009@yahoo.com**;

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