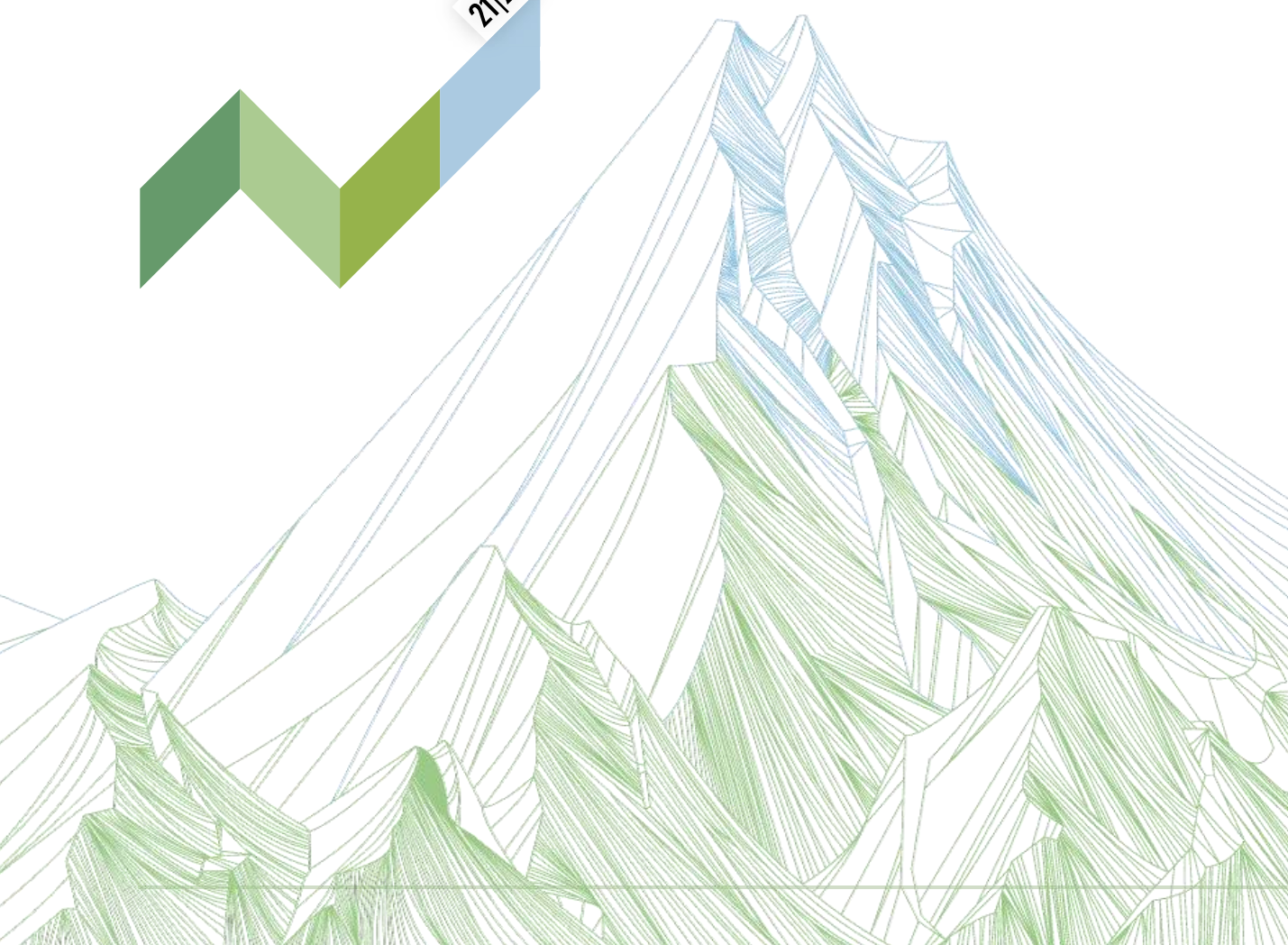


Programme Manual

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Glossary

| | |
|--------|---|
| AA | Audit authority |
| ACP | Alpine Space contact point |
| AF | Application form |
| ASP | Alpine Space Programme |
| IP | Interreg Programme |
| CB | Control Body |
| CPR | Common Provisions Regulation |
| EC | European Commission |
| ECA | European court of auditors |
| ERDF | European Regional Development Fund |
| ETC | European Territorial Cooperation |
| EU | European Union |
| EUSALP | European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region |
| JEMS | Joint electronic monitoring system |
| JS | Joint Secretariat |
| LP | Lead partner |
| MA | Managing authority |
| NGO | Non-government organisation |
| PC | Programme committee |
| PM | Programme Manual |
| PP | Project partner |
| SC | Subsidy contract |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| TSS | Technical support structure |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| VAT | Value added tax |



Introduction

The Programme Manual (PM) of the Interreg Alpine Space programme intends to provide project applicants, lead partners (LP) and project partners (PP) with information and guidance needed for a clear and timely implementation of their funded projects in compliance with the applicable legal framework.

The PM contains provisions concerning all phases of the project lifecycle, from the programme purpose and quality requirements, project generation, contracting through project implementation until closure. Some chapters present the compulsory programme requirements (e.g. eligibility rules) while others intend to guide, inform and support in order to ensure a sound project implementation and management at all levels.

The target audiences of this document are:

- Project managers, finance managers and communication managers appointed by the beneficiaries, which are participating in the approved projects;
- National controllers in charge of validating the expenditure incurred and paid by the beneficiaries;
- Programme bodies.

All interested applicants are recommended to consult this document when preparing their project proposals, since this document sets the conditions for receiving funding from the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) in the framework of the Interreg Alpine Space programme.

If necessary, the information provided in this document will be further developed and updated during the programme implementation. The programme will also provide beneficiaries and national controllers with training and exchange opportunities from early-on in project implementation.

Furthermore, project officers of the Joint Secretariat (JS) will give personalised assistance to beneficiaries (mainly to LPs).



A. Programme purpose and project quality requirements

This chapter is divided in four parts: the first part of the chapter outlines the programme’s expectations for quality partnerships, the result orientation focus and how projects can position themselves in the policy context. All elements developed in this first part are to be understood as transversal and applicable for all project proposals.

The second part of the chapter explains some required features in order to have quality projects and have to be taking into consideration when planning to apply and work within the programme.

The third part of the chapter explains the typology of the projects. Here, the applicants can see the expectations for “classic” and “small” scale projects in the period 2021-2027.

The fourth part of this chapter provides guidance on simple greening measures projects should apply to contribute to tackle the climate change issues and sustainability goals in the European Union.

A.1 Programme purpose

Through its cohesion policy the European Union (EU) ¹ works to reduce disparities in the levels of development, growth and quality of life in European regions. It promotes actions designed to make the European territory more innovative, more sustainable, and more inclusive. While the large majority of the funds designated to reduce these disparities are managed nationally, the EU and its Member States believe that regional development can be improved through cooperation across borders.

In 2015 the Alpine States and Regions gave themselves a common strategy: the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). In order to enable the involvement of relevant partners from the entire EUSALP area in the development of the Alpine Region, the perimeter of the Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 shall be aligned to the perimeter of EUSALP. This is meant to strengthen the coherence between programme and strategy goals and to support the path towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient territory. The focus

¹ EU Cohesion Policy: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/



of activities and interventions on the functional and geographic specificities of the Alps and peri-alpine areas will be maintained. The programme continues to play a key role in implementing the strategy and facilitating transnational cooperation in the area financed by ERDF. Through transnational cooperation, the Alpine Region is striving for joint solutions and exchange in this regard.

A.1.1 Programme bodies and functions

Programme committee (PC)

Consisting of representatives of all Partner States (national and regional level) and a representative of the European Commission (EC) in monitoring and advisory capacity. Relevant Alpine organisations can be members in advisory capacity (the Alpine Convention and other transnationally-relevant non-governmental bodies (NGOs)). Decisions are taken by consensus. Every year another country chairs the PC. The PC is the decision making body of the programme. It monitors its implementation, adopts the terms of reference of calls for project proposals and selects projects for co-funding.

Managing authority (MA)

Appointed by the Partner States it is represented by the Land of Salzburg (Austria), the ‘Department for economy, tourism and municipalities, Sub-department regional development and EU regional policy’ acts as Managing Authority (MA). The MA bears the overall responsibility of managing and implementing the programme.

Audit authority (AA)

Performed by the Federal Chancellery of Austria, Department IV/3 Financial Control of the ERDF. The Audit Authority (AA) ensures that audits are carried out on the management and control systems, on an appropriate sample of operations and on the annual accounts. The AA is assisted by a Group of Auditors (GoA) comprising representatives from each Member State.

Joint Secretariat (JS)

It consists of an international team, often representing the involved Alpine countries. It is the main contact point for the public and for people who want to get involved (together with the Alpine Space contact points on the national level). It provides expertise and assistance to the MA and the PC and is in charge of the day



to day implementation of the programme i.e. assessment of project applications, monitoring of co-funded project, public relations and communications.

Alpine Space contact points (ACP)

Each Partner State has a contact point, usually hosted within a public institution. It provides a link between the transnational and national/regional level. ACPs are the first contact person for project applicants and partners in their countries, and raise awareness on the programme in their country.

A.2 Required features for quality projects

Transnational approach

The projects shall clearly demonstrate why and how the transnational approach adds value in tackling the defined topics. The genuine transnational character and the transnational added value shall be explained, as well as in how far the challenges addressed and the solutions proposed are answering a need identified in the Interreg Programme (IP) and/or in other supranational documents.

It shall be explained why the transnational level is the right level to address the issue tackled by the project, compared to the national, regional or local levels. The benefits and advantages of a transnational approach for the project and for the planned objectives must be clearly demonstrated.

Project Partnership

There are different requirements for setting up a partnership depending on the type of project (see next chapter).

Projects shall consider that it is not the number of partners that makes a project good but the appropriateness and relevance of the partners and the quality of the partnership. The project shall demonstrate, that the partnership includes key/competent actors able to address the defined project objectives. It must also be balanced in terms of geographical coverage and between relevant sectors and administrative levels (e.g. sector-specific expertise, multi-level and multi-sectorial composition).

The partnership should enable knowledge transfer and capitalisation of project results for relevant groups (e.g. business, practitioners, academia or administrations). The involvement of representatives of key target groups as partners is an asset. Relevant stakeholders shall already be involved in the preparation



phase of the project proposal to ensure shared project ownership and a project set up addressing demand in terms of needs and supply. Those stakeholders can join the partnership as project partners or as observers (see chapter below).

Result's durability and transferability

The project shall ensure that its outputs are specific, measurable, realistic, durable and transferable. The project's outputs and results should be clearly linked to the identified target group's needs and should bring an added value to those already in place. The long term use of the project results and the expected impact on target areas (geographically and thematically) and target groups, shall be made explicit. The stakeholders for whom the tackled problem, the intended solutions and proposed project results are relevant shall be clearly identified. A strategy for their involvement, already in the project preparation phase, but also during project implementation shall be foreseen. Further, concrete and solid measures demonstrating that the long term use of project results by the identified target groups is secured shall be planned.

Positioning projects in their policy context

The projects should be aware of the policy context in their field of activities. When developing a project idea it might be helpful to reflect on the following questions: What is the policy background and status? How is the profile of policy development and what are the (project) challenges? Are there already achieved agreements (on national or transnational level)? Being aware of all this will directly influence the factors such as the set-up of the partnership, the structure of the project and the type of the transnational problem that is tackled (political, financial, technical). The structure of the partnership and its consistency must be carefully assessed. Which is the institutional role of the partners in the specific policy field addressed? What is the relevance of the partnership and the ability and know-how of the partners to perform joint transnational actions and achieve the expected results? These are questions projects must ask themselves.

Intervention logic²

² The explanation of intervention logic will follow soon.

A.3 Typology of the projects

For the 2021-2027 period, the programme partner states will follow distinctive approaches to cooperation depending on the thematic priorities (priorities 1, 2 and 3) and multi-level governance (priority 4).

For the thematic priorities, the programme will offer the possibility to submit both classic and small-scale projects. In relation to multi-level governance, the programme will provide funding for the EUSALP technical support and for small-scale projects.

Classic projects

Classic projects have been in place for several years already and offer a result oriented approach, helping to identify the expected contribution of projects in a defined policy field. Classic projects can tackle a wide range of challenges, and depending on the maturity of the topic subject to cooperation, they may address one or more phases of the policy cycle (see Figure 1).

The three phases are summarised below:

- **Strategic policy development** activities through the elaboration of common strategies or methodologies;
- **Explorative and piloting** activities to test models or tools and validate solutions that are applicable to different contexts;
- **Dissemination and capitalisation activities** to encourage **policy implementation** across sectors and regions.

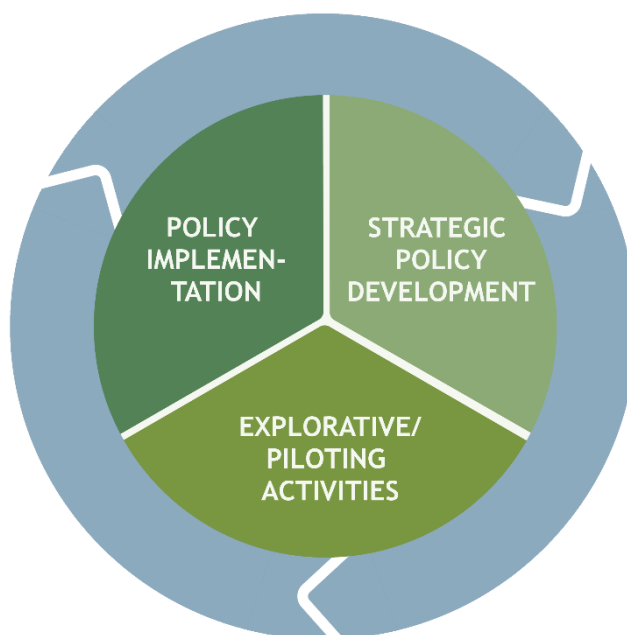


Figure 1: Three phases of the policy cycle

Classic projects apply a result-oriented approach and deliver tangible results to the challenges identified in the IP.

Project applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the characteristics and reference values of classic projects as outlined below:

- The total financial size of each project shall range between EUR 1 and 3 million;
- Eligible expenses from EU Members States are co-financed and reimbursed up to 75 %;
- The duration of classic projects shall range between 24 and 36 months;
- Classic projects shall involve from 7 to 12 partners from at least four different countries of the programme area.

Deviations may be accepted in well-justified cases only.

Small-scale projects

To better respond to the objectives of the new programme and to offer a new form of cooperation this new strand of shorter and smaller projects is offered.



As the name suggests, small-scale projects are shorter and involve less partners compared to classic projects. This typology allows the beneficiaries to address innovative subjects from a thematic and/or territorial perspective and to deliver knowledge be it through analysis, experimentation or fieldwork.

Applicants may submit proposals to “**set the scene**” on themes that are rather new to transnational cooperation, such as biodiversity in urban areas or digitisation in relation to social innovation or circular economy. Another option is to test instruments, tools or policies, through exploratory activities, such as new mobility solutions, application of training tools for risk prevention or the development and testing of digital applications to foster local democracy and the participation of youngsters in decision-making. These and other examples could open up new perspectives for cooperation and the development of projects proposals, which could be submitted under the Alpine Space programme or other funding schemes.

Small-scale projects may also result in capitalisation actions to bring and “**roll-out**” available tools and solutions into boosting their implementation and use in the territories. Such measures aim at widely promoting the up-take of project achievements among identified target groups for greater impact and added value both at local and regional level. These actions predominantly focus on mature fields of cooperation where a body of knowledge is already available and tested by stakeholders. Just to name a few, concrete examples are the transfer of policy recommendations meant to improve the climate change adaptation in the region, make use of the cultural heritage to improve climate resilience, the wide promotion of local energy plans across the territory, or the application of smart solutions for local governance or services to citizens. Such follow-up and spin-off activities are also opportunities to explore complementarities with other projects and initiatives.

As the programme aims to encourage experimentation, small-scale projects will be also a laboratory for new ideas, which draws on experience from a variety of disciplines. Regardless of the approach to cooperation, projects need to demonstrate tangible and realistic outputs. With this approach to cooperation, the programme is also equipped with a tool to react flexibly in a responsive way to any unexpected and/or emerging trend challenging the programme area.

Project applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the characteristics and reference values of small-scale projects as outlined below:

- The total financial size of each project shall range between EUR 250.000 and 750.000;
- Eligible expenses from EU Members States are co-financed and reimbursed up to 75 %;
- The duration of small-scale projects shall range between 12 and 18 months;



- Small-scale projects shall involve from 3 to 6 partners from at least three different countries of the programme area.

Deviations may be accepted in well-justified cases only.

A.4 Project greening

Why project greening?

One of the three horizontal principles stated in the Interreg Alpine Space programme document is “sustainable development”. It is considered carefully in the evaluation of project proposals, which means that all co-financed Alpine Space projects shall be neutral or positive on sustainable development. Nevertheless, the daily project implementation itself has an impact on the environment.

In line with Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1060/2021, the Alpine Space programme strives to adopt eco-friendly practices for all its daily activities, especially concerning events and meetings. Both for the programme and for its projects it is a matter of credibility to get aware of the environmental impact of their activities and to reduce their ecological footprint. Project participants are thus strongly encouraged to apply energy efficient and sustainable principles to their activities. In fact, reducing the impact on the environment can not only add value to a project in terms of credibility, but it can also result in lower costs. This chapter provides guidance on simple greening measures projects can apply to contribute to sustainable growth in the European Union. Its contents are based on the United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP) publications on the topic, namely the UNEP guide to climate neutrality: “kick the habit” and the UNEP Green meeting Guide (see reference documents at the end of this chapter).

A.4.1 Recommendations for project greening

Below are some practical hints for incorporating sustainability into project activities (i.e. events, meetings and travels). Project participants are invited to implement all or as many as possible of these simple actions and to communicate this accordingly.



Project publications and dissemination products

Publications can be disseminated electronically. Printing of publications should be foreseen only if strictly necessary and only if following a sound dissemination plan.

- Short, clear and “to-the-point” publications should be preferred to long ones and images should be reduced to save printing space.
- Publications should be printed for external communication purposes (if needed only) on both sides and on recycled paper. For electronic publications, a “printer-friendly” version (less colours, more compact text, less pages) should be made available.
- Recycled or natural material should be preferred for the production of promotional products. Only useful products should be produced.
- Publications should be printed where they are going to be distributed in order to minimise transportation distances.

Events and meetings

Applying greening principles for the organisation of meetings and events (cf. Checklist for organising green meetings/events at the end of the chapter) provides high visibility for the project’s commitment to sustainability and climate change mitigation.

It is important to communicate effectively, what kind of greening measures the project applies, so that the event participants are made aware of the results achieved in this domain. Some countries offer a green meeting certification (e.g. in Austria: <http://en.umweltzeichen-meetings.at>) for venues and event organisation companies. Certified service providers should be preferred in the meeting preparation phase.

You will find a checklist, which could help facilitate the organisation of green project events and meetings in line with the programme eligibility rules.

HINT BOX

[UNEP Guide to Climate neutrality: “Kick the habit”](#)

[EU eco-management and audit schemes \(EMAS\)](#)

[European green office website](#)

[UNEP: Green meetings guide for participants](#)



Checklist for organising green meetings and events

Before the meeting

1. Explore if a phone or a video conference could be organised instead of a meeting.

Setting up and running the event/meeting

1. Electronic means (e.g. e-mail, website) are used rather than printed materials for pre-meeting and follow-up communications.
2. Participants are encouraged to use sustainable ways of travelling by providing the following information:
 - For short trips favour train to coach/plane and if train is not an option, favour car/coach to plane.
 - Participants are encouraged to share the drive with other participants: a platform is provided for them to communicate and organise ride-sharing.
 - Website addresses to offset the environmental costs of travel are provided.
3. Information on the greening efforts made at the meeting/event is provided electronically prior to, and after the meeting.
4. Paper used is recycled paper and any necessary material is printed at the local venue rather than shipped from elsewhere.
5. Participants' bags/packs are avoided or produced locally using recycled material, and are reusable.
6. Pens are provided only upon request, are made of a high content of recycled material, and are refillable.
7. In case participant's packs cannot be avoided, only strictly necessary material is included.
8. Copying/printing is available upon request at the venue for the participants to print the information received by e-mail beforehand. Recycled or certified paper is available.



-
9. All material produced for the event (such as banners, posters, signs, etc.) is designed and written in a generic way to allow them to be reused for other events.
 10. The start and end of the meeting are adjusted to the schedules of environmentally sound transportation means.
 11. A dedicated area is provided for participants to return material that can be re-used (such as badges).
 12. The use of decorative elements such as flowers, banners etc. is minimised.

Venue

1. Priority is given to locations available in the premises of one of the project participants in order to reduce the need for staff to travel.
2. The venue gives clear indications on the use and handling of the environmental duties in place (reduction of waste, use of reusable dishes instead of disposable ones, tap water etc.).
3. The venue has good access to the main public transport connections and town centre.
4. If possible, all waste produced at the venue is sorted for recycling and sufficient, well-marked bins are provided in both participants and staff areas.
5. It is possible to regulate the temperature within the building. Use of natural light is preferred and the use of stage lights is kept to the strict necessary

Accommodation

1. The hotels are located near public transportation and as close as possible to the conference facilities (preferably within walking distance).
2. Hotels certified with recognised green building system or EMS and/or having environmental policy and action plans are preferred.
3. The hotel should give clear indications on the use and handling of the environmental duties in place (waste reduction, use of reusable dishes instead of disposable ones, refillable soap dispenser etc.).



Catering

The following aspects are taken into account when procuring services, in the specification of services, the criteria for selection or award, as well as in clauses of the contract to be concluded with the caterer.

1. The use of reusable dishes, cutlery, glassware and linens is ensured and aluminium foil avoided.
2. If disposable items are essential, it is ensured that they have a high content of recycled or plant-based material, are recyclable and that appropriate recycling systems are in place.
3. Paper products used for catering have a high recycled content and are totally or elementary chlorine free (TCF or ECF).
4. The use of single-use bottles for beverages is avoided.
5. If possible, all waste produced is sorted for recycling and sufficiently numerous, well-marked bins are provided in catering areas.
6. The caterer is informed on the exact number of participants and is able to re-evaluate the quantities needed to avoid waste.

Food and drinks

1. Locally grown and produced food and drinks are used and menus reflect the seasonal products of the region.
2. The use of organically produced food and drinks is preferred.
3. For products like sugar and coffee, the use of fair trade labelled products is preferred.
4. The quantity of meat products offered is minimised and at least one vegetarian option is offered (as the production of meat produces considerably more CO₂ than non-meat products).
5. Tap water is used and served in jugs instead of in single-use bottles.



Public transport

1. Clear instruction is provided to participants on appropriate public transport and/or walking arrangements from point of arrival/departure (railway station, airport) to the venue, accommodation, town centre, etc. This is provided by e-mail shortly before the event and can be additionally displayed at the venue.
2. A member of staff or local volunteer is provided to accompany the participants from hotel/station to the venue on foot or public transport. If public transport is not available, a shuttle service is organised.

B. Project Generation & Application

B.1 Project Generation

In this chapter potential project applicants can find information related to the process of project generation and the support services that are offered by programme bodies in the phase of project development.

The Interreg Alpine Space programme supports project applicants in the project generation process. The aim of this support is to ensure the development of efficient and high quality projects.

The support is provided through the network of ACPs and the JS, by the means of the following services and tools:

- Thematic workshops at transnational level;
- Info days at national level;
- Project generation services.

The JS has a coordinating function and provides mainly technical information. The ACPs are the main contact at this stage. They provide information on content and consistency of the proposal and its overall coherence to the implementation programme. It includes information on the suitability of the selected thematic



objective, the transnational relevance, the clarity of the intervention logic, the selection of target groups and the suitability of the partnership as well as general advice on the preparation of project proposals.

B.1.1 Thematic workshops

The JS organises transnational thematic workshops focusing on the priorities and informing about the opportunities offered by the programme. The events - physical or online - bring stakeholders, project applicants and project participants together and offer the occasion to network and exchange on project ideas. Matchmaking and project development sessions may be organised when suitable.

Information on planned thematic events can be found on the programme website and national sub-websites, in the newsletter and on social media.

B.1.2 Info days

At national level, ACPs regularly (at least before each call for project proposals) carry out information days. These combine three different strands:

- information on project generation, such as the programme intervention logic, partner search, durability and transferability of results;
- information on application procedures and (national) requirements for upcoming calls;
- information on project implementation, such as reporting procedures and forms, eligibility rules, national control system requirements etc.

Meetings with ACP/JS staff and potential applicants can be organised in the frame of the national info days, provided that project ideas are submitted in advance.

Information on national info days can be found on the programme and national sub-websites, the national and programme newsletters and on social media.

B.1.3 Project generation services

Aiming to steer the project generation process and improve the relevance, focus and quality of the submitted project proposals, the JS and ACPs offer different services to potential applicants.

- Feedback by ACPs and JS

Upon request, ACPs provide feedback on project ideas as well as on the chosen project type and offer support in terms of partner search. The JS provides mainly technical and general information. Feedback by JS and/or ACP can only be given on a project idea. No feedback will be provided on prefilled application documents.

The feedback of an ACP and/or the JS is non-binding and should be considered only as guidance for the improvement of the project idea. It includes information on the suitability of the selected programme, on transnational relevance, choice of project type, coherence with the selected objective, clarity of the intervention logic, selection of target groups and suitability of the partnership.

Feedback by the JS can be provided either at face-to-face meetings arranged alongside national info days or via telephone conference. The ACP network can be contacted anytime (see further details below).

- Bilateral support by ACPs

At any stage of the project generation process, project applicants are welcomed to get in contact with their respective ACP for information and specific support. Information in national language will be provided and appointments for bilateral exchange can be arranged.

Above-mentioned support services and tools are optional and not linked to the timing of the calls for project proposals. They can be called upon at any time. The bilateral support given by ACPs is non-binding and should be considered only as guidance for the improvement of a project idea.

- Online thematic sessions and video tutorials

The applicants may also be assisted by JS in the form of video tutorials and online trainings (taking place when a call for proposal is open). The objective of these sessions is to guide applicants, clarify the programme expectations in different AF sections (e.g. intervention logic, output definition, communication strategy, etc.), provide technical support with regard to the Jems platform (electronic monitoring system used by the programme for the application and monitoring of projects) but also offer them the opportunity to raise questions.

B.1.4 Contacts

Contact details of all ACPs, JS and MA can be found on the Interreg Alpine Space website:

- ACP: <https://www.alpine-space.eu/contacts/joint-secretariat-js/#contactpoints>
- JS: <https://www.alpine-space.eu/contacts/joint-secretariat-js/>
- MA: <https://www.alpine-space.eu/contacts/joint-secretariat-js/#managing>

B.2 Who can participate

In this chapter you can find the information regarding the type of actors that can participate in the Interreg Alpine Space programme (ASP) in the period 2021-2027 and the ways how they can contribute to project activities.

The Interreg Alpine Space programme welcomes the participation of organisations from both the public and private sector that bring added-value to the implementation of projects. These organisations may participate as PPs but may also contribute as observers or external experts. In the following different roles and its prerequisites are laid down.

B.2.1 Project partners

Project partners (PPs) are organisations that are directly participating in the preparation and implementation of an Alpine Space project and are officially listed in the application form (AF) of the project.

Organisations have to fulfil certain conditions as regards their legal character and geographical location.

The following bodies may act as PPs:

- public bodies and bodies governed by public law;
- private organisations.

Natural persons are not foreseen to act as PP in the ASP 2021-2027.

Public bodies and bodies governed by public law are defined in the Directive 2014/24/EU, Article 2, on public procurement as:

- the State, regional or local authorities, associations formed by such authorities;
- bodies governed by public law and their associations. According to this Directive, a 'body governed by public law' is anybody:
 - a) established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
 - b) having legal personality; and

c) being:

- financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law;
- or subject to management supervision by those bodies;
- or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

Private organisations are those organisations having legal capacity, that are not included in the definition of public bodies and bodies governed by public law as set out above.

Only public bodies and bodies governed by public law can act as lead partner (LP). The role as project manager and liabilities of the LP are fixed in the subsidy contract Article 5 and 6.

HINT BOX

Each project will have to identify a LP whose primary task is to assume the responsibility for the preparation and implementation of the project. The LP is representing the partnership and is acting as contractual partner of the MA. In case the lead partner is an organisation from Liechtenstein or Switzerland, an ERDF lead partner must ensure the financial management of the project.

As a general rule, PPs shall be located inside the programme area. The programme area for the Interreg Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027 comprises the following territories:

- Austria: the whole territory
- France - NUTS 2: Alsace, Franche-Comte, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Rhône-Alpes
- Germany - NUTS 2: Oberbayern, Niederbayern, Oberpfalz, Oberfranken, Mittelfranken, Unterfranken, Schwaben; Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Freiburg, Tübingen
- Italy - NUTS 2: Lombardia, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano / Bozen, Valle d'Aosta / Vallée d'Aoste, Piemonte, Liguria
- Liechtenstein: the whole territory
- Slovenia: the whole territory
- Switzerland: the whole territory.

Considering that the programme area is only partially covering the territory of France, Germany and Italy, there are exceptions to this rule on the geographical location of PPs. They concern those cases where a partner is located outside the programme area but still on the territory of a Member State involved in the Interreg Alpine Space programme. French, German and Italian organisations outside the programme area may act as PP if at least one of the following two prerequisites is met:

- The project participant has a competence covering the whole country or participating region (e.g. national/ regional ministries located in the capitals/ regional capitals of France, Germany and Italy) and this is demonstrated in the relevant sections of the AF.
- The contribution of the project participant is for the benefit of the cooperation area and this is demonstrated in the relevant sections of the AF.

HINT BOX

Institutions from other countries than the programme states cannot participate as project partner, but they can participate as observer or external expert in the project.

B.2.2 Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries are those partners receiving ERDF co-financing from the Interreg Alpine Space programme. ERDF co-financing may be granted to partners coming from the EU member states Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia. Partners from Switzerland and Liechtenstein are in general not entitled to receiving ERDF co-financing and are consequently no beneficiaries in the meaning of the programme.

B.2.3 Observers

Project partners may involve observers in the implementation of the project. These observers may provide valuable expertise and support to the project and may play different roles such as multipliers, financiers (in bringing in national co-financing), policy-makers and local implementers. Observers contribute on a voluntary basis and are not eligible to ERDF support. Moreover the participation of observers has no impact on the assessment and scoring of project applications (see chapter B. 5 project selection).



B.2.4 External expertise

In the framework of the project implementation, partners may contract external experts and service providers. Each beneficiary³ must ensure that the involvement of external expertise and services complies with the national public procurement rules and the respective programme rules (for more details please consult chapter B.3.9).

B.3 Eligibility rules

In this chapter you can find the information on eligibility rules to be respected by all Interreg programmes and the eligibility rules that the Alpine Space programme (ASP) has defined valid for all beneficiaries (LP and PPs receiving ERDF funds) in the period 2021-2027.

The EU regulations include common eligibility rules to be respected by all European Interreg programmes (see especially Articles 63 to 67 of CPR Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, Articles 5 and 7 of the ERDF Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 and Articles 37 to 43 of the Interreg Regulation (EU) 2021/1059). In addition to the rules outlined in the EU regulations the Interreg Alpine Space programme (ASP) has defined programme eligibility rules valid for all beneficiaries (meaning LP and PP receiving ERDF funds).

The ASP eligibility rules specify and complement the eligibility rules laid down by the respective EU regulations.

According to Article 37(3) of the Interreg Regulation for matters not covered by the eligibility rules laid down in the regulations or specified and complemented by the programme in this document, the **national rules of the country in which the expenditure is incurred shall apply.**

Beneficiaries are herewith strongly recommended to seek advice at the respective Control body, the Alpine Space Contact Points or the Joint Secretariat if there is any issue related to the eligibility of expenditure that is not answered by the present eligibility rules.

³ Beneficiary is a LP and PP receiving ERDF funds.



B.3.1 General Principles of eligibility

The main preconditions for eligibility of all expenditure incurred are the following:

1. The **expenditure is essential for the implementation** of a project and would not have been incurred if the project had not been carried out (**additionally**).
2. **Costs incurred by public authorities** (e.g. staff costs relating to the implementation of a project) shall be eligible only if these costs do not arise from their statutory responsibilities or day-to-day management, monitoring and control tasks.
3. **Only expenses incurred by the respective beneficiary are eligible.** Expenses based on invoices that are not addressed to the beneficiary respectively expenses based on payments that have not been initialised by the beneficiary itself and costs that are not finally borne by the beneficiary itself are not eligible.
4. The expenditure must comply with the principles of **efficiency, economy and effectiveness**. Especially the cost/benefit ratio has to be ensured.
5. **Double and over financing is not allowed.** In case of financial contributions of third parties specifically assigned to the project or any of its actions, the following rules shall apply:
 - Expenditure which is already co-financed from another EU-funding source shall not be reported to and cannot be co-financed by the programme.
 - Expenditure that is already financed in total by any public subsidy (other than EU) shall not be reported to and cannot be co-financed by the programme.
 - Expenditure that is co-financed partially by any public subsidy (other than EU) can be considered for co-financing only if the financial contribution of the latter is not exceeding the share of the national contribution to the project expenditure according to the approved AF. In any other case the ERDF contribution shall be reduced accordingly (so that the total funding is not exceeding the beneficiary's expenditure).⁴

⁴ Explanatory example: Beneficiary Alps planned a total budget of EUR 100.000 (75 % and therefore EUR 75.000 ERDF, and a fixed national subsidy from federal level amounting to EUR 25.000). After implementation the



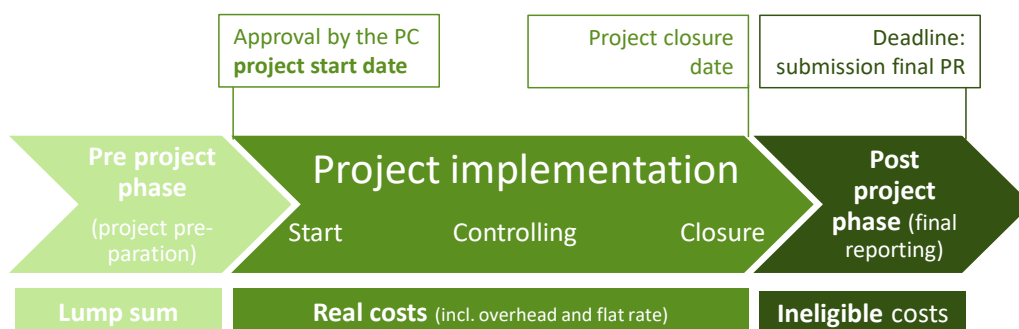
6. Financial contributions (e.g. national grants) that are not dedicated to the specific project approved by the programme are not of any relevance for the calculation of the ERDF co-financing.
7. The expenditure must comply with the principle of real costs except for specific cases such as flat rate, lump sum or depreciation based on simplified costs options as further detailed in this document.
8. **Financing based on simplified cost options (such as flat rates) has to be chosen already in the application phase of a project proposal** (i.e. to be indicated already in the AF) and cannot be selected after the approval of the project.
9. Beneficiaries are responsible for **minimising any possible risk of conflicts of interest**.
10. Expenses related to **contracts between project partners** of the same project concerning the delivery of services, supplies or works among themselves **cannot be co-financed**.
11. **Expenses of organisations contracted via in-house procurement** according to Article 12 (3) of Directive 2014/24/EU can be considered as eligible as long as based on verified actual and eligible costs without any additional fees charged. The respective expenses shall be reported in the cost categories they would normally belong to if directly incurred by the beneficiary. The present eligibility rules therefore apply in full to organisations contracted via in-house procurement too (i.e. staff costs calculation for an employee of such an organisation is the same as the one for an employee of the project partner). The same rule shall apply to contracts concluded between public bodies falling outside the scope of the EU public procurement directive (Article 12 (4) of Directive 2014/24/EU).
12. **All expenditure shall be supported by invoices and proofs of payment** or documents of equivalent probative value (except for flat rates or lump sums). **Electronic invoices can be accepted if these meet the requirements** set out in national law and include information on the funding programme

beneficiary reported eligible expenditure in the amount of EUR 95.000 only. As the national subsidy was granted in the total of EUR 25.000, the ERDF co-financing rate decreases and the final ERDF co-financing will amount to EUR 70.000 only.

and the reference number and name (acronym) of the project. If applicable (e.g. same document covering different cost items), a statement on the share claimed as eligible has to be indicated too.

13. When applicable, the **relevant public procurement procedures have to be respected**.
14. For projects the total cost of which is below 5.000.000 Euro (including VAT) **VAT is eligible**.
15. For projects the total cost of which is at least 5.000.000 Euro (including VAT) VAT is eligible where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation.
16. Any expenditure reported must be in euro. Therefore, expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro will be automatically converted by the JEMS into Euro by using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which that expenditure was submitted for verification (see Article (38(5) of the Interreg Regulation).

Additionally, the **expenditure shall incur in the eligible period**. Following the programme's definition, each project consists of three project phases.



Project preparation: It comprises all activities related to the elaboration of the Application Form step 1 (AF step 1) and AF and ends with the approval of the project by the PC.

For the preparation activities, the programme grants a lump sum for classic projects of maximum EUR 17.250 ERDF (corresponding to EUR 23.000 total eligible costs) if the project is approved. Therefore, costs incurred



during the preparation phase cannot be claimed on a real costs basis (even if paid after the project approval). This lump sum covers all project preparation costs and shall be shared among the ERDF/EU beneficiaries in proportion to their involvement in the preparation of the project (to be detailed in the AF). If a single beneficiary receives any public subsidy from national or regional level for project preparation or application (e.g. seed money) it shall be excluded from the lump sum for project preparation (i.e. lump sum to be shared among the other ERDF/EU beneficiaries only). The lump sum can only be claimed if selected in the initial version of the AF.

No further documentation is necessary, i.e. beneficiaries do not need to document that the expenditure has been incurred and paid, or that the lump sum corresponds to the reality. Please be aware that the lump sum for project preparation cost can be claimed by classic projects only. Small scale projects cannot claim ERDF co-financing for project preparation costs.

Project implementation: The implementation period starts with/after the project approval and lasts until all activities related to the approved work packages of the project are completed. **Costs related to the project implementation and incurred between the project start date and the project closure date (both dates to be specified in the AF) are eligible as long as they are in line with the eligibility rules as outlined in the regulations, this paper and respective national regulations.**

The beneficiaries are recommended to foresee sufficient resources for the administrative project closure (e.g. for the reporting to the LP, the drafting of the final report, preparation of the control) in this period.

Post project phase: Any costs related to activities implemented in this phase are ineligible with the exception of the costs related to the controller of the last reporting period (to be invoiced by the control body and paid by the beneficiary before the issuing of the certification).

HINT BOX

When planning your project, please foresee enough time for the preparation of the project closure within the last reporting period and consider the time and financial resources needed for the closure when doing the calculation of the assignment percentage for the last assignment period.

B.3.2 Cost categories

In accordance with the regulatory framework, eligibility rules are defined for the following five cost categories:

- Staff costs
- Office and administration costs
- Travel and accommodation costs
- External expertise and services costs
- Equipment costs

All cost not falling under the scope of one of the cost categories as specified later in this document are generally ineligible. In line with Article 38 of the Interreg Regulation **costs related to infrastructure and works shall not be eligible within the Interreg Alpine Space programme.**

As summarised in the table below costs for the single cost categories can be determined eligible as follows:

| cost category | real cost options | flat rate options | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| staff costs | calculation as a fixed percentage of the gross employment costs | flat rate of 20 % on basis of external expertise and services costs as well as equipment costs | |
| office and administration costs | - | flat rate of 15 % of eligible direct staff costs | flat rate of 40 % of eligible direct staff costs to cover the remaining costs |
| travel and accommodation costs | - | flat rate of 10 % of eligible direct staff costs | |
| external expertise and services costs | real costs | - | |
| equipment costs | real costs | - | |

The following table demonstrates how these different calculation options can be combined on project level. It shall be stressed that the differentiation between so-called classic projects and small scale projects (as described in chapter A.3) is of relevance in this context, too.

For classic projects all combination options are possible, whereas small scale projects should use flat rate options as far as possible. Therefore for small scale projects only the combinations b) or c) can be applied.

| cost categories | option a) | | option b) | | option c) | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------|---|
| | real costs | flat rate | real costs | flat rate | real costs | flat rate |
| staff costs | fixed percentage method | | fixed percentage method | | | 20 % of external expertise/services and equipment costs |
| office and administration costs | | 15 % of staff costs | | 40 % of staff costs | | 15 % of staff costs |
| travel and accommodation costs | | 10 % of staff costs | | | | 10 % of staff costs |
| external expertise and service costs | real costs | | | | real costs | |
| equipment expenditure | real costs | | | | real costs | |

B.3.3 Staff costs

Staff costs cover gross employment costs of persons employed by the beneficiary and working full or part time on the project in line with their respective employment contracts.



Staff costs of beneficiaries can be co-financed by the programme

- a) on the basis of a flat rate (see detailed description below) or
- b) on the basis of real costs (called „fixed percentage method“).

Each beneficiary shall decide separately on whether to apply the real costs calculation method or the flat rate in the project application phase (i.e. when elaborating the AF). Its choice is valid for all staff members of the beneficiary and cannot be modified during the entire project duration.

HINT BOX

Carefully analyse the planned cost structure of your partner budget (e.g. high staff costs or high external expertise and service costs?). On this basis choose the most appropriate option to combine real cost calculation or flat rates for your cost categories (see table above!).

a) Staff cost calculation based on a flat rate

Staff costs are calculated as a flat rate of 20 % of the direct costs other than the direct staff costs. The eligible amount for staff costs is thus equal to 20 % of the total eligible amount reported under the following cost categories:

- external expertise and services costs as well as
- equipment costs.

The flat rate can only be requested if selected in the initial version of the AF. The flat rate calculation of staff costs can be used provided that the **beneficiary has at least one employee**. A sole proprietor/one-man business cannot claim staff costs.

Audit trail

Beneficiaries do not need documented that the expenditure was incurred and paid, but the eligible expenditure will be calculated automatically in the programme's monitoring system (JEMS). It must be



anyhow ensured and documented, that the beneficiary employs staff during the whole project implementation phase (e.g. by providing a registration at the social insurance agency or annual payroll account).

b) Staff cost calculation based on real costs by using the fixed percentage method

The fixed percentage method is the only staff costs calculation method based on real costs offered by the Interreg Alpine Space programme.

According to Article 39 of Interreg Regulation, staff costs shall be limited to the following:

- a) salary payments related to the activities which the entity would not carry out if the project concerned was not undertaken, fixed in an employment or work contract, an appointment decision (both hereinafter referred to as ‘employment document’) or by law, relating to responsibilities specified in the job description of the staff member concerned;
- b) any other costs directly linked to salary payments incurred and paid by the employer, such as employment taxes and social security including pensions as covered by Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council, provided that they are:
 - fixed in an employment document or by law;
 - in accordance with the legislation referred to in the employment document and with standard practices in the country or the organisation where the individual staff member is actually working or both; and
 - not recoverable by the employer.

With regard to point (a), payments to natural persons working for the beneficiary under a contract other than an employment or work contract may be assimilated to salary payments and such a contract considered as an employment document.

HINT BOX

Only employment contracts (and such ones comparable to employment contracts) fall under the labour law and are therefore to be considered as staff costs, which have to be reported under this cost category. All other contracts like contracts for services are subject to procurement law and consequently they have to be reported under the cost category “external expertise and services”.



In addition, the following principles have to be obeyed:

- The staff costs must be calculated individually for each employee.
- Staff members can either be already employed by the beneficiary or contracted specifically for the project.
- In case of recruitment of staff for a project the internal provisions of the beneficiary/beneficiaries organisation for staff recruitment shall be applied.
- The staff costs declared for an employee must be reasonable.
- The staff costs calculation is based on costs actually paid out and proofed by pay slips or documents of equivalent probative value (e.g. data from the beneficiary accounting system which allows the proof of the payments for each single staff member may be accepted).
- Using this method **does not require establishing a separate working time registration system.**
- Sick or parental leave allowances are eligible as long as they are definitely paid and borne by the PP institution and only within the extent of assignment.
- Unpaid voluntary work (i.e. contribution in kind) is generally not eligible.
- Payments (e.g. personal draw) to self-employed persons (e.g. company owners without any employment contract) are ineligible.
- Voluntary bonuses and rewards (e.g. payments not in line with the employment contract or the employment policy of the beneficiary or payments without any legal commitment) are not eligible.
- Overheads cannot be reported under this cost category (covered by the cost category “office and administration costs”).



- Per diems and any other travel and accommodation costs cannot be reported under this cost category (covered by the cost category “travel and accommodation costs”).

How to calculate the staff costs?

The fixed percentage method seeks to reduce the administrative burdens for reporting staff costs through abstaining from detailed working time recordings. Instead, for each employee an assignment shall be issued laying down **in detail the project related tasks and the time involvement planned** (in percent of the total working time according to the employment contract = assignment percentage).

The staff costs to be reported shall be calculated by multiplying the assignment percentage with the eligible gross employment costs in the assignment period.⁵

The programme has provided a model assignment and its use is obligatory (the related annex will be added accordingly).

As a general rule the duration of assignments shall be aligned with the reporting periods (i.e. maximum duration of an assignment is determined by the respective reporting period, consequently assignments must be issued for each reporting period separately). In case of well justified needs the assignment period might deviate from the reporting period. The assignment shall be issued and signed before the respective assignment period.⁶ As mentioned above, the assignment percentage as fixed in the assignment is the basis for the calculation and reporting of staff costs. Consequently, it needs to be calculated carefully.

It is up to the beneficiary to properly document the way how the assignment percentage was estimated, the programme anyhow recommends the following proceeding:

The main project related tasks to be performed by the employee within the assignment period are defined. Based on the defined tasks, the related working hours are **estimated**. The assignment percentage is then calculated by dividing the estimated project related working hours by the assumed total working hours of the assignment period according to the employment contract.

The assignment percentage remains applicable for the entire duration of the assignment. It should only be changed in exceptional and well justified cases (e.g. changes in the tasks and responsibilities of the

⁵ Example: if the eligible gross employment costs are 4.000,00 EUR and assignment % is planned at 50 % then the reported amount is 2.000,00 EUR.

⁶ Minor delays of a few weeks may be accepted by the controllers.



employee). In this case the employer shall issue an amendment to the assignment, setting out the changes in detail (please use also for this purpose the model assignment).

It is assumed that the activities will be implemented as laid down in the project assignment. There is no need to document minor deviations from the planned activities, whereas **major deviations (not resulting in a changed assignment percentage) shall be documented in a note for file which has to be provided to the controller for information.** Major deviations that make a change of the assignment percentage necessary, require an amendment of the project assignment (see above).

HINT BOX

It is in the responsibility of the PP to ensure a proper documentation of the assignment (especially on the estimation of the extent of assignment). Control bodies may perform plausibility checks on this and therefore might require additional information. Beneficiaries shall provide detailed information about the planned activities in the project assignment. In case the plausibility of the assignment percentage cannot be proofed, flat rate corrections at an appropriate level might be applied by the controller.

HINT BOX

Considering the planned activities in the project assignment, deviations might be classified as follows:

minor deviation: all those deviations for which the activities were *more or less* implemented as foreseen in the assignment. For example a planned but later on cancelled participation in a meeting/event without any impact on the further implementation of the project could be considered as a minor deviation.

major deviation without any change of the assignment percentage: e.g. a replacement of one main activity by another one due to a changed implementation schedule.

major deviation causing a change of the assignment percentage: e.g. taking over of additional tasks and responsibilities because another staff member being responsible for this task so far fell out unexpectedly.

It is in the responsibility of the beneficiary (together with its controller) to ensure that not more than 100 % of the employee's staff costs are co-financed with public funds (e.g.: project X (Alpine Space): 40 %; project Y (Central Europe): 25 %; internal/non-project related tasks: 35 %). Therefore, beneficiaries shall carefully plan the involvement of their employees in public-funded projects (EU and/or national funding).



HINT BOX

Especially in the case of employees assigned to numerous projects of different programmes with different eligibility rules and reporting schemes it may be difficult to prove that employees are financed with maximum 100 % of their eligible gross employment costs. Therefore, the following should be taken into account:

Staff member should be assigned to a manageable number of projects only.

The same staff costs calculation methods for different projects shall be applied as far as possible.

It should be checked carefully which staff cost calculation method is the one most suitable for the beneficiary's institution when applying for co-financing.

Audit trail

In order to ensure a proper audit trail, the following documentation is required if the beneficiary follows the real costs principle:

- employment contract;
- official written assignment of the employee to the project activities (the use of the programme template is obligatory). In case the staff member works for several public funded projects, the official assignment must inform on all projects and clearly indicate the funding sources.
- evidence that internal provisions have been considered in case of recruitment of new staff;
- pay-slips or documents of equivalent probative value (e.g. internal accountancy documents which allow the proof of the payments for each single staff member);
- if applicable, a note for file informing on major deviations from the project assignment as regards the implementation of project related activities.

B.3.4 Flat rate financing for eligible costs other than direct staff costs

A flat rate of 40 % of eligible direct staff costs may be used in order to cover the remaining eligible costs of the project. In case this option is used, no costs can be reported under the cost categories office and administration costs, travel and accommodation costs, external expertise and service costs and equipment costs.



The flat rate can only be requested if selected in the initial version of the AF. Furthermore, it cannot be combined with the flat rate on staff costs and can consequently only be requested in case of staff costs calculated on real costs basis.

Audit trail

No specific audit trail is necessary. Beneficiaries do not need to document that the expenditure was incurred and paid. As regards the reporting of these costs, a separate cost category is foreseen in the AF and progress report. The expenditure will be calculated automatically in the monitoring system (JEMS).

HINT BOX

Please note that possible financial corrections performed on staff costs will directly influence this flat rate. Example: For staff costs the beneficiary has received the amount of EUR 1,000 ERDF from the programme. In addition EUR 400 ERDF (= 40 %) have been paid as a flat rate for other costs than direct staff costs. After an audit 10 % of the staff costs were considered ineligible. Consequently, the beneficiary has to pay back EUR 140 ERDF. The same applies to other flat rates accordingly.

B.3.5 Office and administrative costs

According to Article 40 of Interreg Regulation, 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.

Office and administration costs can only be reported in the form of a flat rate, to be requested in the initial version of the AF.

Office and administration costs are covered by 15 % of the reported staff costs, regardless which calculation method for staff costs is used. **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 cost category.** If no staff costs are foreseen and reported, no office and administration costs can be charged.

Audit trail

No specific audit trail is necessary. Beneficiaries do not need to document that the expenditure has been incurred and paid. The expenditure will be calculated automatically in the monitoring system (JEMS).

B.3.6 Travel and accommodation costs

According to Article 41 of Interreg Regulation, this cost category covers travel and accommodation costs of employees of beneficiaries and shall be limited to the following elements:

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



- e) daily allowances.

Travel and accommodation costs can only be reported in the form of a flat rate to be requested in the application phase (i.e. selected in the initial version of the AF).

Travel and accommodation costs are covered by 10 % of the reported staff costs, regardless of the calculation method used for 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 cost category. If no staff costs are foreseen and reported, no travel and accommodation costs can be charged.

Audit trail

No specific audit trail is necessary. Project partners do not need to document that the expenditure has been incurred and paid. The expenditure will be calculated automatically in the monitoring system (JEMS).

HINT BOX

Travel and accommodation costs of external experts and service providers do not fall under the flat rate for travel and accommodation costs but can be reported under the cost category external expertise and services costs.

B.3.7 External expertise and services costs

According to Article 42 of Interreg Regulation, external expertise and service costs shall be limited to the following services and expertise provided by a public or private law body or a natural person other than the beneficiary and all partners of the operation:

- a) studies or surveys (e.g. evaluations, strategies, concept notes, design plans, handbooks);
- b) training;
- c) translations;
- d) development, modifications and updates to IT systems and website;
- e) promotion, communication, publicity, promotional items and activities or information linked to an operation or to a programme as such;
- f) financial management;



-
- g) services related to the organisation and implementation of events or meetings (including rent, catering or interpretation);
 - h) participation in events (e.g. registration fees);
 - i) legal consultancy and notarial services, technical and financial expertise, other consultancy and accountancy services;
 - j) intellectual property rights;
 - k) controller of the project;
 - l) the provision of guarantees by a bank or other financial institution where required by Union or national law or in a programming document adopted by the programme committee;
 - m) travel and accommodation for external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers;
 - n) other specific expertise and services needed for operations.

The following principles have to be obeyed (please also see the chapter D.2 on public procurement):

- The service or expertise is essential to the project and has been delivered.
- The relevant procurement rules must be respected and properly documented (for details see the dedicated section on procurements further below in this document and the chapter on public procurement).
- As legal basis, the existence of a written contract (or any document of equivalent probative value) between beneficiary and service provider specifying the service to be delivered is a precondition.
- Any expenses based on contracts concluded between project partners are ineligible as project partners shall not be contracted as service providers by any other project partner of the same project (so to avoid a conflict of interest in the procurement of services and goods).
- Contractual advances are eligible if they are in line with normal commercial law and practice, agreed in a written contract between the beneficiary and the expert/service provider, supported



by receipted invoices and provided that the service/supply has been delivered within the project eligibility period.

- Promotional material is eligible provided that the costs of a single item remain limited and do not exceed EUR 50 and that it clearly serves the objectives of the project communication strategy.

HINT BOX

As regards beneficiaries falling under the scope of the public procurement law the programme does not foresee any specific rules for public procurement. Since the national laws apply, we recommend the beneficiaries to carefully check the national law and seek legal experts advice in case of questions. In any case the principles of efficiency, economy and effectiveness should be considered for all external services as these aspects will be obeyed by the controllers also below thresholds.

Audit trail

In order to ensure a proper audit trail the following documentation is required:

- evidence of the procurement process in line with applicable procurement and these eligibility rules;
- written contract (or any document of equivalent probative value) laying down the services to be provided with clear reference to the project;
- daily/hourly rate together with the number of days/hours contracted and the total amount of the contract must be provided for experts paid on the basis of a daily/hourly fee;
- documentation of any change to the contract (any change must comply with the public procurement rules and must be sufficiently documented);
- invoice (or request for reimbursement) providing all relevant information in line with the applicable accountancy rules;
- proof of outputs or services delivered;
- proof of payment.

B.3.8 Equipment costs

In this cost category equipment purchased, rented or leased by a beneficiary, other than those covered by the office and administration cost category, shall be reported. According to Article 43 of Interreg Regulation, equipment is limited to the following items:

- a) office equipment;



- b) IT hardware and software;
- c) furniture and fittings;
- d) laboratory equipment;
- e) machines and instruments,
- f) tools or devices;
- g) vehicles;
- h) other specific equipment needed for operations.

Equipment can only be co-financed if it is necessary for the project implementation or if it is considered as a project output or deliverable. The following principles have to be obeyed:

- Equipment is eligible if it is listed in the AF or if it is approved in advance and in written by the JS
- Equipment is eligible if it is not covered by the office and administration costs (e.g. the IT system of the beneficiary is covered by the cost category office and administration while any IT system developed for the project specifically can be included under equipment).
- Generally, only depreciation costs are eligible. Consequently, a pro-rata calculation needs to be carried out on the basis of a justified and equitable method (e.g. if the equipment was purchased before the start date of the project or the depreciable lifetime ends after the eligible period which means that only the respective part of costs are eligible).⁷
- The relevant procurement rules must be respected and properly documented.
- Costs of equipment which is purchased, rented or leased from another beneficiary are not eligible.
- Costs related to the site preparation, delivery or installation of the equipment are eligible.
- Publicity rules must be observed.

⁷ In exceptional and well justified cases the PC may approve the full purchase price as eligible explicitly.



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- Costs for the purchase of second-hand equipment may be eligible subject to the following conditions:
 - a) no other assistance has been received for it from EU or other public funds
 - b) this price does not exceed the generally accepted price on the market in question;
 - c) it has the technical characteristics necessary for the operation and complies with applicable norms and standards.

Audit trail

In order to ensure a proper audit trail the following documentation is necessary:

- AF in which the respective item of equipment is listed or written approval by the JS in advance;
- evidence that the procurement was done in line with the applicable public procurement law and the eligibility rules of the programme;
- invoice providing all relevant information in line with the applicable accountancy rules;
- proof of payment;
- applicable calculation scheme for depreciation (if relevant);
- proof of the existence of the equipment either through an on the spot check by the controller or another way of verification agreed with the controller like a photo documentation. In this context the compliance with publicity rules shall be verified too.

B.3.9 Procurement of external expertise and services and equipment

National public procurement law has to be observed. For beneficiaries not falling under the scope of the procurement law programme specific rules have been defined. Please consult chapter D.2.



B.3.10 Ineligible expenses

Non-exhaustive list of ineligible expenditure:

- interests on debts;
- costs related to fluctuation of foreign exchange rate;
- national banking charges;
- housing (residential building, domestic architecture);
- purchase of land;
- fines, financial penalties and expenditure on legal disputes and litigation;
- contributions in kind (provision of land, real estate, equipment, unpaid voluntary work, etc.);
- cancellation costs (e.g. venue, catering, travel and accommodation) or costs of any unused travel tickets or booking for external experts;⁸
- costs of gifts;
- any costs incurred before project approval and after project closure (except the costs related to the control of the last reporting period);
- expenditure already funded in total with public funds;
- costs for services, supplies and work not delivered
- communication material that is not in line with the programme rules on communication;
- tips;
- fees between beneficiaries of the same project for services, supplies and work carried out within the project;

⁸The MA may formulate common exceptions to this rule in case of unforeseeable circumstances (such as pandemics and natural disasters).



-
- costs related to the contracting of employees of the project partner as external experts (e.g. as freelancers).

As the list of ineligible expenditure is not exhaustive, expenditure not listed should not be necessarily considered as eligible.

B.4 Project Application

In order to ensure a non-discriminatory and transparent procedure of selecting projects, regular calls for project proposals will be launched on the programme website (alpine-space.eu). Terms of reference (ToR) will be published for each call for project proposals outlining the framework of the call and the specific expectations of the programme in terms of content (e.g. open priorities, topics to be covered and expected results) and eventually also specifying further operational and technical aspects (e.g. budget, partnership).

The selection of the proposals will be based on transparent selection criteria (further outlined in chapter B5 of this manual). Project applicants should acknowledge these criteria when drafting their proposal.

Depending on the characteristic of the project, different project types are defined (small-scale or classic). For the different project types, different application procedures and AF requirements apply.

B.4.1 Application procedure

In the following, the application procedures for the different project types are presented.

B.4.1.1 Classic projects

The application and selection procedure for classic projects takes place in the framework of regular calls for project proposals. Regular calls are launched in average every 12 - 18 months. A higher frequency may be followed in the first years, whereas longer periods without any calls may take place in the last years of programme implementation.

Terms of references are defined and published for each single call considering current developments and possible thematic focuses.

The calls for project proposals for classic project are mainly organised following a **two-step application procedure by submitting an AF**:

- In the first step a light AF (AF step 1) is submitted and the projects are preselected by the programme committee (PC).
- In the second step the submission of the full AF (AF step 2) and the final decision of the PC takes place.

The model timeline for a regular two-step application procedure looks as follows:

| two step application procedure - classic projects | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |
| step 1 - submission period | 6 weeks (+2) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JS evaluation | | | | | | | 6 weeks (+2) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PC preparation and decision | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| step 2 - submission period | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JS evaluation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PC preparation and decision | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

The procedure starts with the submission and evaluation of the AF step 1 version. The PC decision on the pre-selected project applications constitutes the end of step 1. Based on the PC decision, the lead applicant receives a communication from the JS on the results of the process. This communication may include recommendations by the PC on how to improve the application so to meet the expectations of the programme best.

The pre-selected applicants are invited to enter step 2 and therefore to submit the full AF (AF step 2 - including the annexed partnership agreement). After the joint secretariat (JS) evaluation of the full AFs, the PC will take a final decision and approve or reject the submitted applications. Based on the PC decision, the lead applicant receives a letter of approval or rejection from the JS. The letter of approval may include recommendations of the PC for the project implementation.

The whole application process is carried out in an electronic monitoring system (Jems) and lasts 30 weeks at minimum from the launch of the call to the PC decision (single steps may be prolonged due to holiday seasons or in case of a high number of applications received).

The applicants are assisted by Alpine space contact points (ACP) and JS in the form of national info days, applicant seminars, online trainings, video tutorials and bilateral contacts.

Under certain circumstances, a one-step application procedure may also apply for classic projects (especially in the case of restricted calls for project proposals).

B.4.1.2 Small-scale projects

The application procedure is simple and quick to manage as it follows a **one-step procedure**. Small-scale projects can be submitted on an ongoing basis with two cut-off dates per year - decision rounds are fixed and communicated well in advance. All projects will be assessed by the Joint Secretariat with the support of the Alpine Space Contact Points against pre-defined selection criteria. The programme committee will take a decision once the assessment of all applications is complete. In the first years of programme implementation, at two selection rounds per year are envisaged. The terms of references for small-scale projects are published on the programme website and are reviewed annually.

The small-scale projects follow the KISS (keep it short and simple) approach, and consequently not only the AF but also the procedure is simplified. In order to keep the procedure short, the applicants shall provide all relevant information in only one single step.

The model timeline for a small-scale project decision round looks as follows:

| One step application procedure - small-scale projects | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |
| Cut-off date for selection round | | | | | | | | | | | |
| JS evaluation | | 6 weeks | | | | | | | | | |
| PC preparation | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PC decision | | | | | | | | | | | |

Consequently, one selection round covers ten weeks from the submission deadline (submission of the AF - including the annexed partnership agreement) to the decision of the PC. Additional weeks for the JS evaluation may be necessary in case of holiday seasons and/or a high number of applications submitted.

Based on the PC decision, the lead applicant receives a letter of approval or rejection from the JS. The letter of approval may include recommendations of the PC for the project implementation.

Also for small-scale projects support is offered by ACP and JS via regular info days, virtual trainings and tutorials as well as Q&A sessions by JS and ACP.



B.4.2 Application form

The application form (AF) is a binding document, which describes the project and gives detailed information on the work plan and financial figures. It is the reference document for implementation during the whole project duration.

The AF is composed by the following sections:

- Part A) Project Identification
- Part B) Project partners
- Part C) Project description
- Part D) Project budget
- Part E) Partners budget

The template is further explained in AF guidance documents for small-scale and classic projects. These guidance documents shall be studied carefully by all applicants.

Small-scale projects shall fill in a complete AF (shorted in comparison to the one for classic projects). Classic projects shall only provide input to part A), and partly B) and C) of the AF in step 1. The template shall then be finalised and completed in step 2.

The information filled in the text boxes shall be in English, precise and concise as the number of characters is limited. Once the AF is filled in and submitted no changes are possible during the application process.

Applicants shall consult the information on “national requirements”, as additional elements may be requested at national level.

Annex documents⁹

- Annex Ia: AF guidance for small-scale projects
- Annex IIb: AF guidance for classic projects - step 1 and step 2

⁹ The Annexes mentioned in this document can be found the separate document *Programme Manual-Annexes 2021-2027*



B.5 Selection Criteria

All project proposals are evaluated following a standardised and transparent procedure and a set of criteria approved by the PC. Proposals for the so-called “classic” projects are normally selected in a two-step application procedure: a light AF (“AF step 1”) in step 1 and a full version of this document (“AF step 2”) plus partnership agreement in step 2 (see details in chapter “project application”). Proposals for “small-scale” projects are subject to a one-step application procedure requiring the submission of an AF along with a partnership agreement.

B.5.1 Evaluation of proposals

In both cases the evaluation of proposals is carried out by the JS, with the support of the ACP performing national verifications for the partners situated in their country. The evaluation is performed along specific criteria which are approved by the PC (see annex 1.a for classic projects; annex 1.b for small-scale projects); further criteria might be decided by the PC and included in the relevant ToR (e.g. targeted call to specific fields of activities).

There are automatic checks run by the software which is used for the application and monitoring of projects (the so-called “Jems” platform), verifying whether the proposal fulfils the minimum requirements of the programme (e.g. numbers of partners and partner states involved) before the submission of the application. If the proposal fails this eligibility check, the AF cannot be submitted and consequently not assessed.

The **assessment** is appraising the quality of a proposal; it focuses on operational and content-related aspects, in addition to the strategic ones. The assessment of an AF will also take into consideration the compliance with the recommendations given by the PC after step 1 in the framework of “classic” projects (see below).

B.5.2 Selection of proposals

The PC, composed by representatives of the Partner States of the programme, is the decision-making body and is therefore responsible for project selection. As a result of the assessment, the JS proposes a list of projects recommended for approval to the PC. An assessment report is developed for each project proposal. The decision on the selection is taken in a PC meeting. In this meeting, national delegations discuss the



different proposals and come to a common agreement on their approval or rejection. Decisions are made by consensus of all Partner States.

Classic projects

- **AF step 1**

The step 1 consists of the assessment of strategic aspects only, i.e. the main aim is to assess the relevance and need for the project proposal as well as the extent of its contribution to the achievement of programme objectives. In step 1, project proposals that show a good quality and a high strategic relevance for the programme are invited by the PC to submit a detailed AF and signed partnership agreement in a second step. If appropriate, the PC gives recommendations to those invited to the second step on how to further elaborate the project proposal to better meet the expectations of the programme. The conditions for being recommended by the JS are the following: an assessment score of 70 points or more (out of 100) and at least a minimum of 50 % of points in each cluster criteria.

- **AF step 2**

The focus of step 2 is more on the operational level and long-term aspects. This notably means that there won't be any new evaluation of questions already assessed in step 1, unless there is a specific PC recommendation addressing one (or several) strategic assessment criteria and/or sections of the AF related to the strategic assessment criteria have been changed by the applicants. In step 2 projects are approved or rejected. The PC selects by consensus the proposals that show good quality and are consequently highly scored and grants a certain ERDF co-financing by the programme. In justified cases, the PC might formulate recommendations together with the approval decision, which are then followed up by JS during the project monitoring. In addition, a letter of deficiencies will be sent out after approval. The threshold for projects to be recommended by the JS for selection to the PC is - like in step 1- of 70 points (out of 100). Moreover, a minimum of 50 % of points in each cluster criteria should be reached in order to be recommended for the approval.

Small-scale projects

The process and minimum requirements described under the previous point “Classic projects > Project applications (step 2)” are the same applied for the selection of small-scale projects. The only difference rests on the fact that the selection is done at the end of a one-step application procedure, which means that the assessment of the proposals is based on an AF covering both strategic and operational aspects.



B.5.3 Information and support to applicants

Information is provided to lead applicants in the relevant steps of the application procedure and support is given by MA, JS and ACP during applicant seminars (applications for “classic” projects having passed step 1) and/or lead applicant seminars (projects selected for co-funding). The applicants are assisted by Alpine space contact points (ACP) and JS in the form of national info days, applicant seminars, online trainings, video tutorials, Q&A sessions and bilateral contacts. At the end of the selection process, the list of approved projects is published on the programme website together with a news thread. In addition, all lead applicants are notified by JS on the approval or rejection of the project; the communication includes an evaluation report and reasons for approval/rejection. In case of approval, the subsidy contract (SC) is attached to the letter.

B.5.4 Procedure for complaints

Resolution of complaints related to decisions of the programme committee on project evaluation and selection is detailed here (document to be developed).

Reference documents

- EU Regulation 2021/1059
- Terms of reference of the relevant call for proposals

Annex documents

- Annex II.a Selection criteria “Classic projects”
- Annex II.b Selection criteria “Small-scale projects”

C. Contractual Arrangements

During the application phase and after approval, a number of contracts have to be signed by the project LP and partners. You can find information and templates below.

C.1 Partnership Agreement

According to the European structural and investment funds (ESI) Regulations for the period 2021-2027 (Article 26 of Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059 the lead partner (LP) shall conclude an agreement with its project partners (PP) which shall contain provisions that guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the project, including arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid. Project consortia that submit an AF to the programme shall provide a copy of the signed partnership agreement (PA) together with the application.

A subsidy contract (SC) will be signed between the LP and the MA, whereas the PA constitutes the contractual relationship between all project participants. While the LP is responsible for ensuring the proper project implementation towards the MA, each PP is responsible to the LP for bringing in its project contribution and giving full support to the LP to ensure the successful project realisation.

The PA provides the framework for efficient project implementation and management and aims at guaranteeing the project's contribution to reaching the programme's objectives. The partnership agreement shall raise awareness of and clearly define the responsibilities of LP and PP in a legally binding manner.

Since project arrangements are complex in transnational cooperation partnerships, the programme provides a template for the PA. This template contains the minimum clauses that shall be foreseen by the projects. Please note that a separate template for the PA has been developed for projects that have a LP coming from a non-Member State. The template for the PA makes reference to the AF and the model subsidy contract which covers many of the issues that might typically occur during project implementation. The PA template regulates e.g. conditions for project changes, rights and obligations related to information and communication, financial control, audits or project results or financial liabilities.

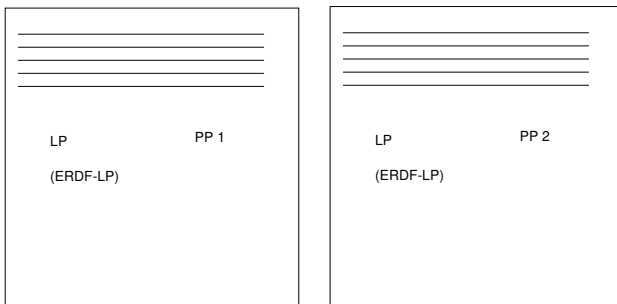
In case the template is used without inserting any additional regulations it can immediately be signed by all project participants after having completed it with the project-related data, i.e.:

- name of the project,
- agreed working language,
- applicable law (this shall be the law of the country in which the LP is situated in, in case of a project with an ERDF-LP the laws of the country in which the latter is located shall apply),
- place of jurisdiction.

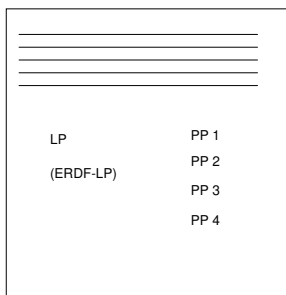
Of course, project participants are free to add clauses to the ones of the template PA. In order to verify that these additional clauses do not contradict the relevant EU regulations, programme rules and other provisions of the model PA, these additional clauses need to be checked by the MA. Therefore, the LP shall coordinate any envisaged additional clauses with the MA in advance (by sending the draft PA via mail to alpine.space@salzburg.gv.at). As soon as the additional clauses have been checked by the MA the PA can be signed by the project participants.

As regards the signature of the PA the projects have two options:

Option 1: The PA can be signed *bilaterally* (respectively *trilaterally* in case the project has an ERDF-LP), i.e. each copy of the PA bears the signature of the LP (and ERDF-LP, if existent) and of one of the project partners.



Option 2: The PA can be signed *multilaterally*, i.e. each copy of the PA bears the signatures of all project participants (LP, ERDF-LP, if existent, and all other PP).





In case project participants face problems or delays in the signature process they shall get in touch with the JS or MA immediately so that a solution can be found.

The PA shall be set up in so many copies that each project participant receives one. Please note that the programme only needs a scan of the signed PA(s). This scan has to be submitted to the programme via the electronic monitoring system (JEMS) together with the AF (see annex).

At the occasion of a seminar organised by the programme for the, guidance and detailed explanation on the template PA and the signature process will be provided.

The MA and JS will also provide for support to clarify any other legal questions related to the PA and the project. The occasion of the above-mentioned seminar shall be used by the LP to have an exchange with the MA and JS on these issues. Informing the MA about any open questions by the LP prior to the seminar is highly recommended, as it enables the programme to provide for answers at the seminar.

Reference documents

- EU Regulation 2021/1059, art. 26
- Chapter 'Project application'
- Chapter subsidy contract (including template of subsidy contract)

Annex documents

- Template partnership agreement for projects with a LP from a Member State
- Template partnership agreement for projects with a LP from a Non-Member State and an ERDF-LP from a Member State

C.2 Subsidy Contract

According to the European structural and investment funds (ESI) Regulations 2021-2027 (Article 22 of Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059 the MA) shall provide a document to the LP setting out the conditions for the ERDF-co-financing of the project, including specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered by the project, the financing plan, the time-limit for execution and, where applicable, the method to be applied for determining the costs of the project and the conditions for payment of the support. Therefore, the MA will conclude a so-called subsidy contract (SC) with the LP.

In case the project has a LP from a Non-Member State and an ERDF-lead partner (ERDF LP) from a Member State this SC will be concluded with LP and ERDF-LP.

The SC is an essential element within the framework of managing and monitoring the territorial cooperation programmes. This contract stipulates the rights and duties of the LP (and ERDF-LP, if such exists) as well as of the programme bodies and other organisations involved in the implementation of the programme (e.g. MA, JS, programme committee, control bodies, organisations involved in the second level control). It regulates issues like reporting obligations and procedures, conditions for project changes, obligations and rights related to information and communication activities, provisions on financial controls and audits of the project, use and ownership of project results or liabilities of the LP.

Since the tasks of the MA are performed by the Land of Salzburg in Austria the subsidy contract is based on Austrian law.

Experience has shown that various project participants cannot start with project activities as long as partnership agreement (PA) and SC are not signed. With the aim to speed up the contracting procedure, the programme foresees that project applicants have to submit copies of the already signed PA together with the AF.

The programme has set up a template SC which will be used for all projects selected for co-financing.

Attached to the letter in which the MA/JS informs the LP about the approval of the project, two copies of the SC already filled in with the project-related data will be sent to the LP. The LP will have two weeks to return a signed copy of the contract to the MA.



For projects that have a LP coming from a Non-Member State and therefore also have an ERDF-LP a separate template SC has been developed by the programme. In case of these projects three copies of the SC will be set up and more time will be foreseen for the signature process since both, LP and ERDF-LP shall sign the SC.

If the SC is not signed within the given period of time the ERDF-co-financing for the project will not be secured.

At the occasion of a seminar organised by the programme, guidance and detailed explanation on the SC will be provided.

The JS and MA will provide support to clarify any other legal questions related to the SC and the project. The occasion of the above-mentioned seminar shall be used by the LP to have an exchange with the JS and MA on these issues.

Reference documents

- EU Regulation 2021/1059, art. 22
- Chapter 'Partnership agreement'.

Annex documents

- Template subsidy contract for projects with a LP from a Member State
- Template subsidy contract for projects with a LP from a Non-Member State and an ERDF-LP from a Member State



D. Project Implementation

This chapter provides project participants with information and guidance related to project implementation after approval and for the whole project duration.

This chapter will be included soon.

D.1 Control and audits *(to be added)*

This chapter will be included soon.

D.2 Public procurement *(to be added)*

This chapter will be included soon.

D.3 State aid *(to be added)*

This chapter will be included soon.

D.4 Project communication *(to be added)*

This chapter will be included soon.



D.5 Ownership of project outputs and intellectual property *(to be added)*

This chapter will be included soon.

D.6 Project changes *(to be added)*

This chapter will be included soon.

D.7 Project reporting *(to be added)*

This chapter will be included soon.

D.8 Project management *(to be added)*

This chapter will be included soon.



E. Project closure (*to be added*)

In this chapter describes the process and the relevant steps to be taken by the LP once the project has reached the end date of its implementation. In this regard, there are a number of considerations to be made on how to initiate the project closure. These are described in the sections below.

This chapter will be included soon.