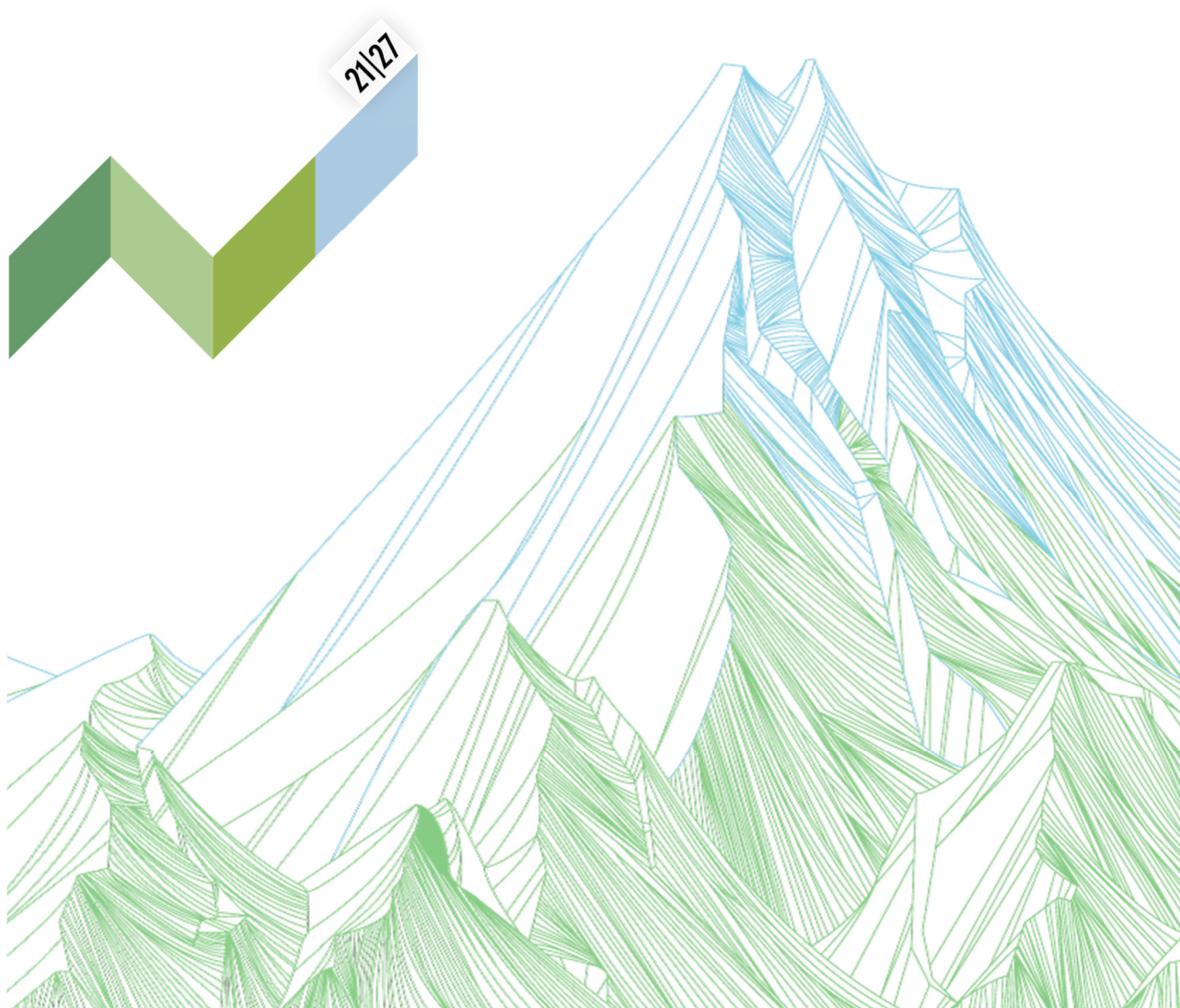


# Evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the operational implementation of the communication strategy

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Invitation to submit an offer





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## Procurement procedure

The Interreg Alpine Space programme (hereafter referred as programme) is an EU transnational cooperation programme co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) whose purpose is to support transnational cooperation projects between partners that promote economic, environmental and social development. The total ERDF budget for the 2021-2027 period is €107 million.

The implementation of the funds is done through the Interreg Programme (IP), which sets out a joint strategy for the programme's contribution to key objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy in the 2021-2027 period. The IP consists of four priorities and seven specific objectives (Annex 1).

The programme is bound to carry out evaluations with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of its activities. The evaluation plan outlines a number of evaluation activities whose purpose is to enable informed management decisions and make improvements in result orientation (Annex 2).

The purpose of this award procedure is to select a service provider to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the operational implementation of the communication strategy, which is in place since October 2022 (Annex 3).

Land Salzburg acts as Managing Authority (MA) of the programme. Within this role, Land Salzburg bears overall responsibility for the implementation of the programme, including the launch of public procurement procedures for the provision of services needed for the fulfilment of its tasks. The MA and the Partner States of the programme are supported by the Joint Secretariat (JS).

The contract between the service provider and the programme will be set up based on Austria law and concluded with Land Salzburg. The tender follows a direct award procedure as provided in § 46 of the Austrian procurement law (BVerG 2018).

## Background information

### State of play of programme implementation

The programme is half-way of its implementation following the launch of five calls for project proposals, three of which on small-scale projects. Up until now, 46 projects have been approved across all thematic priorities bringing together 350+ beneficiaries from a wide range of sectors, from public administration to academia. The programme has already committed €66.7 million ERDF, which represents nearly 70% of the

budget for the 2021-2027 period.

## Regulatory framework for the evaluation

The EU (legal) provisions that regulate the evaluation process and are relevant for the scope and contents of this assignment are:

- Article 35 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments (hereafter referred to as Interreg Regulation);
- Article 18 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy, so-called Common Provisions Regulations (hereafter referred to as CPR);
- Commission Staff Working Document (SWD(2021) 198 final): Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027.

These provisions were considered in view of ensuring that the requested evaluations are planned and that these comply with the set requirements. The programme's evaluation plan specifies how the programme evaluation will be organised during the 2021-2027 period. The plan, which sets out the priorities and needs for evaluation, is related to the IP.

## Specification of services

### Evaluation purpose

In October 2022, the Programme Committee (PC) approved the communication strategy whose purpose is to steer the implementation and management of the communication activities during the 2021-2027 period. The strategy defines the approach to communication through objectives and specifies which communication channels will be prioritised to reach out to target groups. The communication objectives are as follows:

- Build capacities for an effective implementation and communication of the projects and the programme;
- Bring the programme and its achievements closer to citizens;

- Position the programme at the forefront of the transition towards an innovative, climate-neutral Alpine Region.

On top of this, the strategy identifies 11 key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the achievements of the communication objectives.

More recently, the programme conducted a survey to beneficiaries, whose results led to the development of follow-up measures, including training and networking opportunities, which will be implemented throughout the year of 2025.

The purpose of this evaluation is to **assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the operational implementation of the communication strategy and its measures**, in view of the progress in reaching the communication objectives. The programme is particularly interested in understanding how the communication strategy is (1) effective in fulfilling expectations and meeting its objectives and (2) efficient in terms of cost-effectiveness and proportionality of actual costs to benefits. The programme believes that communication is key to boost the spread of results and improve its reach out. In this respect, a combination of communication actions taken both at programme and project level is needed.

This evaluation will allow the programme to draw conclusions as to whether the communication strategy and its objectives remain fit to its purpose or require adjustment and measures for greater effectiveness and efficiency.

## Evaluation process

The responsibilities and functions are set out in the Interreg Regulation. According to Article 35, the MA is responsible for the design and delivery of the plan while the PC takes over the supervisory function, as indicated in Article 30.

The MA and the JS will carry out the operational work related to the implementation of the plan, including the preparation and follow-up of meetings, the implementation of public procurements for external support, and the coordination with stakeholders. The MA/JS will inform and involve the PC in the evaluation throughout the 2021-2027 period.

The PC will examine the progress made in carrying out evaluations according to the evaluation plan and its amendments as approved by the PC, syntheses of evaluations and any follow-up given to findings.

In addition to this, the evaluation plan will also count with the support of a working group set up by the PC whose purpose is to represent programme stakeholders and provide expertise in support of this evaluation

activity.

## Evaluation questions

The leading question to be addressed by the evaluator is:

- What is the progress in the implementation of the communication strategy and achievement of the communication objectives?

This question shall be answered following the evaluation of the aspects asked by the sub-questions:

- Is the communication strategy written in a way that eases the implementation and allows reaching the set objectives?
- Are the objectives of the communication strategy set in a way to contribute to the programme's overall objectives?
- Are the communication activities adequately tailored to the different target groups and geographical areas covered by the programme? Have the programme communication measures reached the relevant target groups efficiently?
- How effective are the communication tools and activities for reaching the communication objectives?
- What communication actions have been more effective and why? Which one have failed and why?
- How effective are communication measures with its main target groups? Are these measures effective in reaching the relevant target groups? How effectively are the various channels of communication used by the programme?
- How effective were the programme's measures in enabling projects to communicate their achievements to end users?
- Do the KPIs capture the impact and effectiveness of the communication activities?
- Does the communication strategy contribute to awareness raising about the programme?
- Do target groups consider the programme useful?
- Does the communication strategy need to be updated for the remaining programme period based on the evaluation findings?

## Evaluation approach and methodology

All companies interested in this procurement shall specify in their offers the tools and methods they intend to apply during the evaluation. The bidders are also invited to suggest different or additional evaluation

questions in their bid. The proposed methodology must be the most suitable and effective in order to allow the provision of comprehensive answers to the evaluation questions, and produce conclusions and recommendations in view of improving the delivery of the communication strategy and its objectives for target groups.

## Services and timing

During the assignment, the evaluator is expected to build up reliable evidence of the effectiveness and efficiency of the operational implementation of the communication strategy. Based on the evidence presented and analysed, the evaluator must provide answers to the leading question as well as the sub-questions.

The following deliverables are to be submitted by the evaluator in English:

Deliverable	Description	Due date
Inception report	Detailed methodology and timeline for the evaluation based on available data and the outcome of the kick-off meeting	End of May 2025
Interim evaluation report	Information about work performed so far, presentation of first conclusions and recommendations to the programme	By mid-July 2025
Draft evaluation report	Detailed analysis of all collected data and input, concrete answers on all agreed evaluation questions and conclusions and recommendations to the programme	Late September 2025
Final report	Submit a consolidated version of the draft evaluation report, considering all inputs and requests made by work group	Late October 2025

The kick-off meeting with the selected bidder will take place online in May (CW21 or 22) 2025. During this meeting, the work plan for the following months will be discussed and fine-tuned, if needed. Further two meetings will be organised to present and discuss deliverables whereby one of these meetings might take place in person in Salzburg.

## Award criteria

The following criteria will be applied by MA/JS to assess the offers of the tenderers:

Criterion	Weight	Points
Experience and qualification of the evaluator(s) (education, relevant projects)	40%	40
Evaluation approach and methodology	35%	35
Price	25%	25

As a result, it is imperative that the offers provide information about the:

- Qualification and experience of the proposed evaluator(s), notably in terms of education, knowledge and expertise in the evaluation of Interreg programmes, but also in Interreg communication;
- Methodological approach for the service delivery;
- Financial offer (using the template provided by the programme in Annex 4).

The price requested by the tenderer must be a lump sum that covers all costs arising from the complete delivery of the service, including office and administrative costs, travel and accommodation costs, and overhead costs, if any. Additional costs will not be reimbursed, such as preparation costs associated with the drafting and submission of the offer. VAT is to be indicated separately and prices have to be indicated as fixed prices. Please note that the Land Salzburg has MA has reserved an indicative amount of 20.000 Euro including VAT for the present service contract.

Please consider that Land Salzburg as contracting authority may request additional documents to verify the authorisation of the company to deliver the service, countercheck its professional reliability as well as its financial, economic and technical ability to perform the service.

Offers must be drafted in English and sent electronically in PDF format via email to [js@alpine-space.eu](mailto:js@alpine-space.eu) no later than **22 April 2025 7:00 PM CET**.

Any changes in the teams of evaluators after the conclusion of the contract will require the approval of the MA, particularly if the expertise is not comparable.

All questions related to this procurement procedure must be formulated in English and sent to [js@alpine-space.eu](mailto:js@alpine-space.eu) by 9 April 2025. The programme will publish the answers to questions received on the same website where this procurement document is available by 14 April 2025. Tenderers are encouraged to read these



questions and answers before submitting an offer.

## Annexes

Annex 1: Interreg Programme

Annex 2: Evaluation Plan<sup>1</sup>

Annex 3: Communication Strategy

Annex 4: Financial offer template

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the mid-term evaluation mentioned in the evaluation plan is not applicable to the programme and not relevant for the present tender.

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