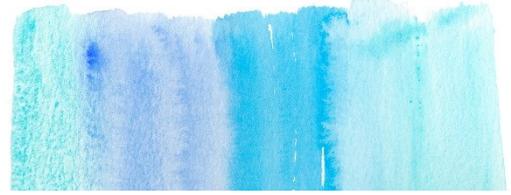


Interreg
Mediterranean



PROGRAMME MANUAL

PROJECT START-UP

Programme cofinancé par le Fonds Européen
de Développement Régional (FEDER)

Programme cofinanced by the European Regional
Development Fund (ERDF)

After the consolidation of the Application Form and in parallel with the signature of the Subsidy Contract (for more information please refer to the factsheet “Contracting procedures”). Lead partners should start, in cooperation with their Project partners, a series of administrative steps in order to set-up an efficient management system and to secure the first payment to project partners.

The following steps are related to project start-up and must be developed on the first months after the submission of the consolidated Application form allowing project partnership to lay the foundations for a smooth development of the project.

Set up of the project steering committee

Each project must determine the necessary procedures for decision-making and coordination between the partners. For this reason, and according to Article 3.2 of the Partnership Agreement, MED projects are requested to set up a project steering committee, an internal organ of the project, composed of representatives of all the partners.

The tasks of the Steering Committee include:

- Monitoring and validation of project contents: This includes verifying that the project implementation is in line with activities and outputs defined in the approved Application Form. Furthermore it means validating the quality of main project outputs and the progress towards achieving set objectives;
- Monitoring of project finances: This includes monitoring the project budget, budget flexibility and project spending;
- Review of the management performance and of the quality of progress reporting towards the programme bodies;
- If applicable, decisions on required project modifications (e.g. content, partnership, budget, duration) to be requested for approval to the programme bodies. If a partner jeopardizes the implementation of the project, the Steering Committee can decide to exclude the partner in question from the project. In this case, it will be necessary to address a request for change to the Programme Authorities (please refer to the factsheet on “Partnership architecture, requirements and relevance”);
- Working groups, task forces and advisory groups may be established to coordinate the day-to-day running of activities, to fulfil specific tasks, etc. Adequate representation of involved partners must be observed in establishing decision-making and coordination mechanisms.

The setup of the project steering committee and the organization of the first meeting must be ensured within two months from the project’s start.

During the first meeting of the project steering committee the following points should be addressed:

- Approval of the rules of procedure of the steering committee ;

The Programme encourages Lead Partners to inform, as early as possible, their Project Officer at the JS about the organization of project events in order to facilitate the support and involvement of the JS in project meetings.

- Establishment of management and coordination structures in charge of ensuring a good management and coordination of the project;
- Clarifying obligations mentioned in the contractual documents to all the partners;
- Presenting the main elements related to the qualitative aspects of the implementation of the project as well as of the good administrative and financial management, eligibility of expenditure, first level control procedures, calendar of submission of payment claims and progress reports, and use of Synergie CTE;
- Choice, if applicable, of a contact person for the work to be carried out with the horizontal project.

The minutes of the first steering committee of the project, indicating the start of project activities, must be **submitted to the JS within 3 months from the project start** and a copy shall be sent to each partner's National Contact Points. This document proves the start of operations while describing in detail the management structures that guarantee the proper implementation of the project.

Creation of partner accounts on Synergie CTE

It is necessary to update the contact details of the partners during the pre-contracting phase.

After consolidation of the Application Form in Synergie CTE (for more information see Factsheet "contracting procedures"), an automatic e-mail will be sent by Synergie CTE to each partner contact person in order to create a partner account in the system.

In case of contacts already having an account, they will have to use the existing one.

Preparation costs for ERDF partners

When preparation costs for ERDF partners are foreseen in the Application Form, this amount may be paid to the structures indicated in the Application form, as soon as the subsidy contract is signed by the MA and the LP institution.

In practice: after notification of the contract signed by both parties, the JS will formalize the request for reimbursement of project preparation costs, according to the sub-division approved in the consolidated application form, and transmit the document directly to the Certifying Authority (CA).

The ERDF payment corresponding to the amount of the preparation costs (€ 30,000 of total eligible budget) will be paid by the CA to partners as indicated in the application form and according to the approved ERDF co-financing rate for each of the partners.

Advance payment for IPA partners

The Interreg Med Programme offers the opportunity for partners from IPA countries to receive during the project starting phase, an advance payment representing **10% of their IPA budget**.

An advance request must be submitted to the JS by each IPA partner, no automatic mechanism is foreseen

In practice: after signature of the Subsidy contract by the LP and the MA, the LP beneficiary and the concerned IPA PPs receive confirmation from their Project Officer (PO) of the signature of the Financing agreement between the IPA partner countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania), the European Commission and the MA. It is only from that date, and after signing the project Subsidy Contract by both parties, that **an IPA partner may issue its request of advance.**

IPA PPs requiring advance can enter expenses in the system but should not certify any amount before formalizing their advance request. The delays on the signature of the Financing Agreement might affect mostly the first Call for projects.

The request of advance payment corresponding to 10% of the IPA partner budget is filled-in online by the partner, then validated, signed and downloaded on SYNERGIE- CTE.

After reception by the JS and if the national representative of the partner country has not issued an opinion contrary to the payment, the JS forwards the advance request to the CA for payment to the IPA partner.

This advance will then be progressively deducted by the Programme from the first four payment claims of the concerned partner (4x deduction of 25% of the advance paid at the beginning of the project).

Start-up for the FLC certification of costs

In accordance with the terms mentioned in Articles 23 (4) of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 and 125 (4) and (5) of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, the "first level control" (hereinafter FLC), ensures the existence of the co-financed products and services and the control of expenditures declared by the beneficiaries. Each participating state (Member State or third country) is responsible for the appointment of FLC and controls on its territory and might have chosen either a centralized or a decentralized FLC system.

The partners should get in touch with their national authorities as soon as possible during the starting phase, to either have the first exchanges on the procedures to obtain the approval of selected FLC, needed time and national forms (for those in centralized systems) or for selection and appointment of the controller (for those in decentralised systems).

Delays in this first contact can lead to delays in the reporting procedures which might have a negative impact on the financial flow of the project.

Preparation costs

Approved projects which successfully signed the Subsidy Contract with the Managing Authority are entitled to receive reimbursement of their preparation costs in the form of a lump-sum. That means that in case projects foresee this kind of expenditure in the Application Form (**the lump sum is not automatic**), they will be reimbursed with no need to present invoices or other administrative justification for the incurred costs.

The reimbursement of these costs will follow the principles detailed below:

- The lump sum is not automatic. Preparation costs budget must be indicated in the Application Form, giving concrete information on the amount allocated to the concerned ERDF project partner(s);

Please bear in mind that one eligibility criterion checks that the lump sum of EUR 30.000 for preparation costs is not exceeded. The non-respect of this criterion will declare the proposal ineligible.

- The lump sum will amount to **EUR 30 000** of **total eligible expenditure** per project;
- The co-financing rate of the preparation costs will be in line with the co-financing rate applicable to the partner(s) to which the lump sum is allocated;
- The lump sum covers all costs linked to the preparation of the project;
- Any difference between the granted lump-sum and the real costs occurred for preparation is neither checked nor further monitored by the Programme;
- Only ERDF partners are entitled to budget and claim preparation costs.

The partnership decides which ERDF partners will receive what share of the reimbursement of preparation costs. It is strongly recommended to reach a consensus within the partnership on the distribution of preparation costs, reflecting the actual preparation activities carried out by the partners in a fair and transparent way.

After the signature of the Subsidy Contract, the ERDF corresponding to this lump-sum will be automatically transferred to partners concerned, according to the information included in the approved Application Form. **No changes will be accepted after the approval of the proposal.**

In case a project is not implemented or even started, the MED Programme Monitoring Committee reserves the possibility of recovering the ERDF already reimbursed based on this lump-sum.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Each project must set up a **monitoring and evaluation system** from the start of the project. This system must enable the Steering Committee of the project to evaluate the general progress of the project. It must give information on the following points:

- Progress noted in the achievement of the objectives of the project on the basis of output and result indicators defined by the Programme;
- Level of effectiveness and efficiency of the project implementation: Does the project proceed in accordance with the initial calendar presented in the Application Form? Is the budgetary programming running correctly and are the allowances by budgetary heading respected? Are the results coherent compared to the expenditures committed (ratio cost/benefit)?
- Quality of the organisation, of the management and coordination: are the management and coordination procedures efficient and are the resources devoted to these processes sufficient?

For further information regarding project follow-up and project implementation support system, please refer to Factsheet "Support for project implementation".

Note that the assignment of an external expert for evaluative monitoring is compulsory for multi-module projects and horizontal projects (see Factsheet "Multi-modular projects" for further information).