



Interreg



Co-funded by
the European Union

Euro-MED



INTERREG EURO- MED 2021-27 PROGRAMME MANUAL

Versions	Content	Date
V1.0	Publication of chapters I.A, I. B, I.D, I.E, I.F	22/02/2022

Table of contents

Introduction.....	4
I. Building my project and submitting my application.....	6
I. A. Getting informed about the calls for proposals.....	6
i. Different types of calls for proposals.....	6
ii. Background documents to be considered.....	6
iii. Events to support project applicants.....	7
iv. Tools available for project applicants.....	9
I. B. Building my consortium.....	10
i. Project Partnership architecture.....	10
A) Project coordination and Lead Partner role.....	10
B) Project partners.....	13
C) Associated Partners.....	16
ii. Eligibility and legal status.....	17
iii. Partnership relevance.....	23
I. C. Drafting my project activities (drafting ongoing)	
i. Intervention logic	
ii. Project's composition	
iii. Principles governing activities and productions	
iv. Horizontal principles and Greening	
v. Designing your communication strategy	
vi. The project website and the Interreg Euro-MED web platform	
I. D. Drawing up my budget.....	25
i. Co-financing of operations.....	25
ii. Costs to be paid in advance by beneficiaries.....	26
iii. Guiding principles.....	26
a) Project budget developed in close cooperation with partners.....	26
b) Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness.....	28
c) Budget in Euros.....	28
d) Costs categories to be considered.....	28
e) Location of activities.....	29
f) Activities to budget.....	29
g) VAT.....	31
I. E. Submitting my application.....	32
i. Jems: the Programme's online monitoring tool.....	32
ii. Submission of proposals.....	33
a) Application Form.....	33
b) Annexes.....	35
I. F. Assessment of proposals and results.....	36
i. Appraisal of proposals.....	36
ii. Project's selection and communication of results to lead partners.....	37
II. Implementing my project (drafting ongoing)	
i. Signing the subsidy contract	
ii. Starting the project	
iii. Internal communication and community building	
iv. Methodological tools	
v. Reporting + monitoring indicators	
vi. Checking the ISO projects	

- vii. Amending to my project
- viii. Closing my project
- ix. Deliverables / Project platform
- III. Financial issues (drafting ongoing)
- III. A. Expenditures eligibility
 - i. Rules hierarchy
 - ii. Support
 - iii. Ineligible expenditures (VAT and extra EU regions not validated)
 - iv. Categories of expenditures
 - v. Project branding and information and advertising rules
 - vi. Aid states
- III. B. Public procurements and fair tendering
- III. C. Expenditures' financial flow
 - i. Financial reporting - reg 21-27 no revenues
 - ii. Payments
 - iii. Decommitment
 - iv. Ineligible expenditures declared to EC
 - v. Equipment exclusive use (template)
- III. D. Controls, audits and verifications
 - i. JS verifications
 - ii. National controls
 - iii. Audits
 - iv. Other controls levels
- IV. Legal mechanisms (drafting ongoing)
- IV. A. Data protection
- IV. B. Fraud
- IV. C. Conflict of interest
- IV. D. Intellectual property
- IV. E. Complaints and dispute settlement
- V. Annexes (drafting ongoing)
- V. A. Deliverables' list
- V. B. Methodologies and indicators
- V. C. Green events
- V. D. Bank information details
- V. E Mapping Jems
- V. F. Mapping Platform
- V. G. Graphic identity

Disclaimer

These parts of the Programme Manual have been approved by the members appointed to the Task Force (TF) of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme 2021-2027. The document is based on the draft Interreg Programme (IP), which has been set up in compliance with Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 on the specific provisions for Interreg, and according to the template annexed to the aforementioned regulation.

The Programme has not yet been approved by the European Commission (EC). Thus, neither have the Programme authorities been formally established or confirmed nor have the selection procedure and criteria been formally approved.

Please be aware that contents of the Programme document may change substantially following negotiations of the partner states with the EC and that the formally established Programme Monitoring Committee might take other decisions than the provisional one. And this may have effects on the content of the Programme manual.

As long as the Programme is not approved by the EC, all decisions taken by the members appointed to the Task Force of the 2021-2027 Interreg Euro-MED Programme are under provisional effectiveness. Upon approval of the Programme, the decisions will become effective (in case the then formally established Monitoring Committee does not decide otherwise).

For further information on the programming process, please visit the [Programme website](#) or consult the network of Interreg Euro-MED national contact points (NCP) or the Joint Secretariat (JS).

Introduction

This Manual aims to describe and explain the rules applicable to proposals and projects selected within the framework of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, hereafter referred to as "Programme". This document is divided into parts, chapters, sections and annexes, all of them complementary and organised according to the "life cycle" of a project also referred to as "operation".

In the table of contents, you will see all the parts of the complete Programme Manual. The parts indicated with the mention "drafting ongoing" in red are still being drafted by the Joint Secretariat. They will be available in the coming weeks.

The elements established in the Programme Manual are binding and constitute the rules of the Programme. These elements are based on the applicable European regulations and approved by the Monitoring Committee of Interreg Euro-MED.

The Manual is addressed to the stakeholders involved in the different phases of a project: potential applicants, applicants, lead partners and partners of a project, but also controllers and possible associated partners.

As those responsible for all phases of project implementation, from development to closure, **Lead Partners** are expected to be familiar with the contents of this Manual and to keep themselves informed of any changes. In addition, Lead Partners are expected to use the Manual for information purposes and to disseminate it to **project partners** in order to ensure the proper implementation of project activities and the knowledge and understanding of the Programme rules by the whole partnership.

The Sections: *Implementing my project*; *Financial issues* and *Key legal mechanisms* should be known and handled by the **national controllers** (First Level Controllers - FLC) in charge of the validation of the declared expenditures.

I. Building my project and submitting my application

I. A. Getting informed about the calls for proposals

i. Different types of calls for proposals

Open calls for proposals: This is a " wide audience " type of call for proposals and is open to any type of application and partnership respecting the expectations of the Programme as defined by the Terms of Reference of the Call. Access to the Application Form is done via a free account creation, directly on the monitoring tool "[Jems](#)" (Joint Electronic Monitoring System).

Restricted calls for proposals: This type of call is open to partnerships composed of "pre-identified" or "invited" beneficiaries to apply by the Programme Authorities on the basis of criteria approved by the Monitoring Committee of the Programme. Access to the Application form for restricted calls is usually provided by the Joint Secretariat (JS) but this may vary according to the procedure defined in the Terms of Reference of the call.

At the launch of each call (open or restricted), a series of tools, developed by the JS in cooperation with the National Contact Points¹ is made available to applicants to support and inform them on the contents of the call and the steps to be taken to submit their proposal. All the elements related to the opening of a new call will appear on the dedicated web page of the Programme².

ii. Background documents to be considered

Before starting the drafting of a proposal, it is essential to refer to the following documents:

- **The Terms of Reference** of each call and its **technical data sheet** including the eligibility and assessment criteria
- The Word application form template (**courtesy version**, provided for information with specific indications to facilitate the writing of the proposal)
- **The Jems guide** for entering the proposal on the Programme's IT tool

¹ See the [list of NCPs](#) on our website, "contact us" section => NCP

² <https://interreg-euro-med.eu/en/get-involved/>, "open calls" section

- The Programme Manual
- The Euro-MED 21-27 Cooperation Programme and its annexes
- The Euro-MED 21-27 Communication Strategy
- The Euro-MED 21-27 Results Amplification Strategy
- The Presentation document of the Interreg Euro-MED ACADEMY³

For further information, the network of National Contact Points (NCPs) representatives and the Joint Secretariat team (programme@interreg-euro-med.eu) are available to applicants.

iii. Events to support project applicants

Different types of events are organised by the Programme for each call for proposals in order to inform and support potential applicants. The content and timing of the following events may vary according to each call for proposals.

An information session at the launching of each call:

An information session is systematically organised by the Programme at the occasion of each call opening to inform potential applicants about the Programme, the content of the Terms of Reference (topics addressed, objectives and specific expectations of the Programme towards the call). Depending on the type of call concerned, this informative session can be attended with free registration or upon invitation (from the Programme or the national authorities).

During this day, participants receive information on the key steps and tools of the call, and the elements relating to the application and assessment phases will be reviewed. Time is scheduled for discussion with the JS team.

The participation to this session is strongly recommended for any (lead) partner potentially interested in the Call, in order to limit as much as possible, the presentation of proposals that would not be adapted to the Programme's expectations.

³ [Interreg Euro-MED Academy](#)

Technical meetings to facilitate proposal writing:

Technical meetings are regularly organised by the JS throughout the application phase of a call and aim **to support applicants in the construction of their proposal**. These meetings are generally organised online and consist of a half-day session *focusing on one of the key points in the preparation of a proposal* (partnership, work plan, eligibility of expenditure, etc.). Public question and answer sessions are also organised as part of these days.

The frequency and content of technical meetings may vary depending on the complexity of the Terms of Reference and the type of call.

Thematic seminars:

For each new call for proposals, and after the approval of the Terms of Reference by the Monitoring Committee of the Programme, **thematic seminars** may be organised to *facilitate the understanding of the Programme's architecture, to encourage the sharing of experience and the transfer of results, etc.* Speakers from outside the JS may also lead this type of seminar.

Depending on the type of call concerned, the thematic seminars may be accessible with free registration or upon invitation (from the Programme or the national authorities).

Bilateral meetings with the JS:

Where appropriate and if foreseen by the Programme Authorities for the relevant Call for Proposals, **bilateral meetings** are organised on specific slots, appointments must be made via an **online form**. A **project idea**⁴ will be submitted to the JS by the applicants when applying for this type of meeting.

Bilateral meetings bring together a limited number of potential partners for the same proposal and members of the Secretariat for approximately 30 minutes and

⁴ Template for project idea provided by the Programme

enable applicants to better understand the Programme's expectations with regards to a given theme.

No pre-assessment of the proposal or technical recommendations on the precise drafting of the proposal can be made during these meetings.

The Secretariat undertakes to receive the first applicants within the limit established by the Programme at the time of the publication of the call and of **one meeting** per project idea.

Before the meeting, and to maximise the time dedicated to the exchanges, it is expected that the applicants have read the Terms of Reference and the Call's key documents in full.

iv. Tools available for project applicants

Online Forums⁵ : On this dedicated platform⁶ made available to applicants by the Programme, applicants can post their project ideas, discuss them, and compose or consolidate their partnership.

A Frequently Asked Questions section to assist project applicants:

As soon as the call is launched, the JS and the National Contact Points are available to provide answers to the various requests submitted to the Programme. To limit the burden of individualised answers, **questions relating to a running call must be addressed only via an online form⁷** made available to applicants on the Programme webpage. Questions are processed by the JS and published on the FAQ where the Programme's answer will appear as soon as possible. Applicants are invited to consult the FAQ regularly for updates.

Technical requests for access to the IT system will be addressed to the JS in the same way.

⁵ The forums are not mediated by the Programme

⁶ [Get involved - Programme Interreg Euro-MED \(interreg-euro-med.eu\)](https://interreg-euro-med.eu), "Find project partners" section

⁷ [Documents & tools - Programme Interreg Euro-MED \(interreg-euro-med.eu\)](https://interreg-euro-med.eu), below the FAQ section.

I. B. Building my consortium

i. Project Partnership architecture

A) Project coordination and Lead Partner role

Each partnership appoints one organisation to act as **Lead Partner**, which takes **full responsibility** for the implementation of the entire project (Article 26 of Reg 1059/2021).

Who can be Lead Partner?

The Lead Partner is a **public body or a body governed by public law** (according to the definition of the Directive 2014/24/EU). The Lead Partner must be **physically based in any of the eligible regions of the Euro-MED Programme area**⁸.

Private institutions or international organisations acting under national or international law **cannot act as Lead Partners**.

Role and obligations of the Lead Partner

The Lead Partner:

- **prepares the proposal** in collaboration with all the partners involved in the project;
- **submits the Application Form** and is responsible for related contents and commitments;
- **signs a Subsidy Contract** with the Programme Managing Authority;
- **signs a Partnership Agreement** with all partners involved in the project;
- ensures the **coordination of the partnership** and of the project in line with **sound financial**⁹ and **project management principle**;
- **maintains** a functional and permanent **communication flow** among the partnership and ensure an **efficient exchange of information** that enables the successful delivery of the project outputs;

⁸ Interreg Euro-MED programme area is composed of 69 regions of 14 countries: 10 EU Member States and 4 EU candidate or potential candidate countries.

⁹ The principles of sound financial management are defined in Financial Regulation 2018/1046 art 2 and detailed in the present Manual, chapter "Drawing up my budget".

- is responsible for **communication with the Programme bodies**, namely the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat;
- **gathers from the partnership** all partner's inputs related to financial and activity reporting and **consolidate** them to prepare the project reporting elements.
- ensures the timely submission of the necessary information for the content and financial reporting to the JS.

Profile of the Lead Partner

The Lead Partner should have the following profile:

- Experienced in the **management of EU funded projects**;
- Prepared to take a **leading and driving role** within the partnership;
- Having **sufficient capacity (institutional, financial and human resources)** to prepare the project application and to manage the implementation of the project;
- Having the relevant **thematic knowledge** and **expertise** for the project;
- Being **committed** throughout the project proposal application process as well as during the implementation phase;
- **Must speak and read fluently French and/or English (at least the LP coordinator)** depending on the project's working language chosen in order to ensure efficient communication within the partnership and with the Programme authorities.

Expected staff profiles requirements and responsibilities

To manage the project efficiently, the Lead Partner must elaborate an **efficient and reliable management and coordination system**. The coordination concerns the implementation of the various components of the project, including its **administrative and financial management**.

The Lead Partner must appoint a **project coordinator** and a **financial manager**.

The **project coordinator**:

- is experienced so as to ensure the **thematic coordination** of the project activities and components;
- is able to act as a **driving force of the project and to mobilise the partnership** in order to achieve the objectives laid down in the application;
- is experienced in management of EU funded projects;
- **speaks and reads fluently French and/or English** depending on the project's working language chosen to ensure communication within the partnership and with the Programme authorities.

The **financial manager**:

- is experienced so as to ensure the management of the **project budget**, including budget modifications, financial reporting and submission of payment claims to the Programme and verification of correct Interreg funds transfer to the partners;
- is responsible to **closely and regularly monitor** the financial performance of the project partners;
- works in close contact with the project coordinator and the partners in order to enable the **efficient overall financial management** of the project;
- ensures that the project **does not contribute to the Programme de-commitment risk**;
- is familiar with **accounts management**, as well as with handling international transactions;
- is aware of the **EU and national legislation** regarding financial management and controls, public procurement and, where appropriate, State aid.

The legal representative:

- has the power to **act and sign**, on behalf of the Lead Partner, and is responsible for the signature of contractual documents with the Managing Authority.

B) Project partners

Who can be partner?

Partners can be:

- **Public body or a body governed by public law** (according to the definition of the Directive 2014/24/EU).
- Private institutions
- International organisations acting under national or international law

Points of attention

- Private companies whose main activity, as well as their project role, is solely **limited to supporting actions** (project coordination, management, communication, etc) cannot be involved as project partners. Indeed, their participation could fall within the **scope of public procurement**, and usually do not contribute to the overall project activities.

Compliance with this requirement will be checked during the quality assessment of each project proposal and in the framework of **partnership relevance and transnationality** analysis.

If such a situation happens, the result of JS analysis held during the assessment phase would be presented to the Programme Committee and could lead to the exclusion of the concerned partner.

- Only legal person with legal capacity can participate to a project as beneficiary of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, **physical persons cannot take part in a project as partner**.

Role and obligations of the project partners

- **sign a Partnership Agreement** with the LP and all partners involved in the project;
- **comply with all the rules and obligations** stated in the Programme contractual documents;
- have the Financial and administrative capacities to implement project's activities and anticipate the payment of project's costs;
- are responsible for **communication with its national representative within the Programme**, namely the National Authority (NA), the National Contact Points (NCP), the Authority in charge of the designation of the national controller;
- contribute to project activities under the direction of the LP and in cooperation with the rest of project's partnership in line with **sound financial¹⁰ and project management principle**;
- **contribute to a functional and permanent communication flow** among the partnership to ensure an **efficient exchange of information** that enables the successful delivery of the project outputs;
- ensure the **timely submission** via Jems (deadlines agreed with LP) of the elements related to the reporting on finances and activities to the lead partner.

Profile of the project partners

Partners should have the following profile within their team:

- **the legal representative** who has the power to act and sign is responsible for the signature of the project partnership agreement with LP and other project's partners,
- Dedicated team to the project that **must speak and read fluently French and/or English depending on the project's working language chosen** (in

¹⁰ The principles of sound financial management are defined in Financial Regulation 2018/1046 art 2 and detailed in the present Manual, chapter "Drawing up my budget"

order to comply with the assigned project obligations and to ensure efficient communication within the partnership and eventually the Programme authorities) and **able to manage all projects related tasks (about content but also administrative /financial part).**

Additional staff profiles are required in the project and can be either part of the Lead Partner or partner's team (NB: a same person can also cover different profiles in the same project)

The **communication officer** :

- is responsible for the whole project communication activities;
- must have experience in communication;
- must provide a regular work relationship with the related thematic community project and with the Programme;
- attends external events, when justified and useful for the project, other than the thematic community project events and seminars.

The **result amplification referent**:

- is assigned to actively participate in the activities of the thematic community corresponding to the mission the project contributes;
- has a good grasp of the Results Amplification Strategy of the Programme;
- ensures that project outputs are designed in a transferable way;
- mobilises within the partnership the relevant partners to perform joint activities related to the Results Amplification Strategy implementation (at project and Programme level).

The **carbon footprint referent**:

- defines the project's strategy for carbon offsetting;

- ensures that all partners implement the methodology;
- validates the offsetting activities;
- ensures that project activities are designed to minimise emissions;
- supports the full project partnership in using the offsetting tool.

C) Associated Partners

Public, private or international Institutions willing to be involved in the project **without financially contributing** to it are to be considered as “**associated partners**” (AP).

Associated partners can be partners located in any EU Member state or in a third country.

Associated partners do not receive any Interreg funding from the Euro-MED Programme and must participate with their **own funds**. In justified cases, expenditures related to associated partners participation to project's activities, can be borne by a financing partner (generally the one they're attached to, in the approved Application Form) and in compliance with the applicable eligibility rules (reimbursement of expenditure incurred by these bodies should in principle be limited to travel and accommodation costs related to their participation in the project activities).

Associated partners are not considered for the fulfilment of the minimum partnership requirements.

Projects shall develop a strategy for the selection and involvement of associated partners, considering their nature and their roles in the project. 3 main roles for associated partners are identified:

- Advisory (provide expertise in the theme tackled),
- End-users/takers/final beneficiaries (use the outputs delivered)
- Observers/supporters (for endorsement)

Role and obligations of the associated partners

- Must appear in the approved application form and be attached to a financed project partner;
- Must sign an **associated partners declaration (template provided by the Programme)**;
- Should agree in advance, with the project partner it's attached to, to any costs that may incur in the framework of project's implementation;
- The involvement of associated institutions must not be in conflict with public procurement rules. Sub-contracting between associated partners and any partner of the project they're participating to, is prohibited.

ii. Eligibility and legal status

The project partners located in the **area (69 regions)** covered by the Interreg Euro-MED Programme¹¹ or in the European Union **can be co-financed by the Interreg Funds**.

Eligible partners shall be the following:

1. **National, regional and local public bodies** (including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013)
2. **Public equivalent bodies¹²**:
 - are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
 - have a legal personality;
 - are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have 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.

¹¹ See the cooperation area map [here](#)

¹² i.e. bodies governed by public law as defined in Article 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement

3. Private institutions, including private companies:

- have a legal personality;
- are not financed, for the most part, by the state, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law; or are not subject to management supervision by those bodies; or not 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.

In Interreg Euro-MED projects, private structures cannot take on the role of a Lead Partner.

NB: Private institutions from IPA partners countries must be non-profit private entities founded according to the applicable legal framework/law in the respective IPA country **and** can be eligible under **the following conditions¹³** :

- 1) they do not have a commercial or industrial character or activities;
- 2) they are non-profit and have a legal personality;

4. International organisations acting under the national law of any EU Member State or under international law (see restriction below).

International organisations acting under national law of an EU Member State or under **international law**, can participate in projects only upon their **explicit acceptance of all requirements deriving from the Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union** and the regulations applicable in the framework of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme.

As for any other activities supported by the Programme, activities implemented by international organisations are subject to management verifications and audits. During the assessment phase, a formal **confirmation of acceptance for the partner's participation** will be requested to the competent National Authorities where the participating office/antenna of the organisation is located. In case of failure, the partner will be excluded from the project.

¹³ Mentioned conditions shall be checked with respective National Authority

The explicit acceptance of all above requirements shall be mentioned in **an *ad-hoc document*** which must be signed by the international organisation and the hosting country and forwarded to the Joint Secretariat afterwards.



Focus: Partner (public or private) located in a region out of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme area¹⁴.

Partner located in a **Region outside the Interreg Euro-MED Programme area but belonging to one of the 14 Interreg Euro-MED Programme States:** (e.g: partner located in Lille, Paris, Oporto, Santander, etc):

1. It can be project partner (co-financed by the Interreg funds) and participate to a project under all missions and irrespective of the legal status of the partner but it **cannot act as LP**.
2. Concerning management tasks (certification of expenditures, audits, etc), no difference is made between an “Interreg Euro-MED region” and “the rest of the National territory of a State participating to the Programme”. Control, Management verifications and audits responsibilities are already covered by the Agreement signed between the Programme and the State.
3. Its participation to the project brings **added value** and expertise to the implementation of a project and **benefits to the Programme area**.

Partner located in a **Region outside the Interreg Euro-MED Programme and belonging to an EU Member State other than the 14 Interreg Euro-MED Programme States** (e.g: partner located in Brussels, Berlin, Vienna, etc.):

1. It can be project partner (co-financed by the Interreg funds) and participate to a project under all missions and irrespective of the legal status of the partner but cannot act as LP.
2. **During the assessment phase, a confirmation of the eligibility** and of the legal status of the partners located within the EU but outside the Programme area will be requested to the competent National Authorities.

¹⁴ Interreg Euro-MED Programme area is composed of 69 regions of 14 countries: 10 EU Member States and 4 EU candidate or potential candidate countries.

The responsible authority of the respective EU Member state shall provide a confirmation. In case of failure, the partner will be excluded from the project.

3. In case of project approval, an agreement on management, control and audit responsibilities will have to be signed between the Managing Authority and the relevant EU Member State or Regional competent authority. The time limit for getting this agreement will be of maximum 6 months after the project approval (and in any case before the submission of the first payment claim). In case of failure, the partner might be excluded from the project and its expenditures, if any, lost.
4. Its participation to the project brings **added value** and expertise to the implementation of a project and **benefits to the Programme area**.

For each call, and in case of eventual restrictions related to the partnership, the terms of references (ToRs) provide a list of the categories of partners admitted for the call as well as information on suitable expected partnership.

List of types of partners

Main categories	Examples ¹⁵
Local public authority	municipality, etc.
Regional public authority	regional council, etc.
National public authority	ministry, etc.
Sectoral agency	local or regional development agency, environmental agency, energy agency, employment agency, etc.
Infrastructure and (public) service provider	public transport, utility company (water supply, electricity supply, sewage, gas, waste collection, etc.), airport, port, railway, etc.
Interest groups including NGOs	international organisation, trade union, foundation, charity, voluntary association, club, etc.
Higher education and research	university faculty, college, research institution, RTD facility, research cluster, etc.
Education / training centre and school	primary, secondary, pre-school, vocational training, etc.
Enterprise, except SME	

¹⁵ More examples can be found in the relevant Terms of Reference.

Euro-MED

SME ¹⁶	micro, small, medium
Business support organisation	chamber of commerce, chamber of trade and crafts, business incubator or innovation centre, business clusters, etc.
EGTC ¹⁷	
International organisation, EEIG ¹⁸	under national law, under international law

DRAFT

¹⁶ According to Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium size enterprise.

¹⁷ European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

¹⁸ European Economic Interest Grouping.

In brief

	LOCATED IN EU MEMBER STATES	LOCATED IN A EURO-MED IPA STATES	CAN BE LEAD PARTNER
National, regional and local public bodies	✓	✓	✓ Only located in Euro-MED regions
Public equivalent bodies (bodies governed by public law as defined in Article 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU)	✓	✓	✓ Only located in Euro-MED regions
Private institutions	✓	✓ Only non-profit private institutions	✗
International organisations	✓	✓	✗

iii. Partnership relevance

Transnational aspects

Projects from the cooperation area must have a transnational dimension.

As a minimum requirement, the partnership of any Interreg Euro-MED project must involve:

- at least **4 financing partners**;
- from at least **4 different countries** from the Programme area and
- among which, at least **two partners are based in an EU region of the Programme area**.

The size of any project partnership should reflect the scope of the project and remain manageable. The Terms of References of each call for proposals set specific requirements regarding the partnership.

Relevance

The quality of a project depends largely on an adequate composition of its partnership. The setting up of a relevant partnership is essential. A good partnership should pool all skills and competences of relevant institutions necessary to address the issues tackled by the project in order to achieve the set objectives and namely those set for the chosen module(s).

When building a partnership, the following general aspects should be considered:

- Focus your partnership on **relevant** entities to reach the project results (e.g. thematically, geographically, level of governance);
- Involve as project partners only institutions whose **interests are closely linked** to the project objectives and planned interventions. They should also have the capacity to create strong links to target groups addressed by the project;
- Apply a **result-oriented approach** by involving institutions who are supposed to realise and subsequently implement the project outputs and results;
- Ensure that involved institutions have the **required competences** (e.g. involve environmental authorities if you work on the development of environmental policies);

- Ensure a **balanced partnership** in terms of number of institutions involved per country. Distribution of project activities and responsibilities as well as related budgets should also be balanced in regard to project's objective;
- Ensure that **decision makers** (e.g. ministries, regional governments) are either directly **included** in the partnership or can be effectively reached by the project partners, even indirectly;
- Where necessary, involve **expert organisations** (e.g. universities, research institutions) as a source of knowledge;
- Keep the partnership **size manageable** (for further information regarding specific partnership requirements per type of project please refer to the Terms of References of each call for proposals);
- Ensure the **commitment** of all partners from the very beginning. Once the project is approved partner changes should remain exceptional cases, creating a strain to the entire project;

EU institutions from outside the Programme area should be involved in justified cases. Their involvement should bring a clear benefit to the Programme area adding a clear, tangible value to the partnership.

I. D. Drawing up my budget

i. Co-financing of operations

European Territorial Cooperation projects are projects co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds. In the framework of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, the Interreg grant (ERDF and IPA) represents **80% of the total eligible budget of the project; the remaining 20% of the budget is therefore at the charge of the partners** who must ensure the co-financing of their activities by other sources of funding (own funds, private funds or national public funds).

The co-financing rate is **the same for all partners (80%)** regardless of their status and regardless of the possible state aids scheme in which they choose to participate.

The part of the expenses not reimbursed by the Interreg grant (**20%**) must be financed by each Lead Partner and project partner through a co-financing, which can take the following forms:

Public:

- **Own public contribution:** national, regional or local public funding provided directly from the public partners' own funds or public equivalent;
- **Automatic public contribution:** national, regional or local public funding, obtained through co-financing mechanisms specifically established by specific Member States (Italy and Greece¹⁹);
- **Other public contribution:** national, regional or local public funding provided by public institutions or public equivalent.

Private:

- **Private own contribution:** private financing based on the private partners' own funds;
- **Other private contribution:** private funding provided by private institutions, but not involved in the partnership;

¹⁹ Concerned partners should contact their National Authority for more information on these co-financing mechanisms

The nature and amount of the contribution of each Lead Partner and project partner, whether public/public equivalent or private, must be **specified by the Lead Partner in the Application Form**. All co-financing partners of the project (including the LP) will have to fill in and sign their own declaration (which must be annexed to the Application Form, see application procedure).

ii. Costs to be paid in advance by beneficiaries

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme does not provide for any advance of funds and operates according to a principle of reimbursement of costs which must first be committed and paid²⁰ by the partners and finally certified (controlled) by independent controllers. When a structure confirms its willingness to participate in an Interreg Euro-MED project, it must first ensure that it has sufficient cash flow to advance the programmed funds and to guarantee, from its own funds, the implementation of its first activities in order to allow the good start of the project.

After disbursement, the partners will have to consider **unavoidable delays related to the expenditure declaration process** (entry into the system, validation of the costs by the LP, certification by the various competent authorities and declaration to the Programme's accounting authority) before receiving the effective reimbursement of expenditures on the bank account²¹ indicated in Jems.

iii. Guiding principles

a) Project budget developed in close cooperation with partners

Before writing the proposal, the Lead Partner must consult its partners in order to agree with them on the different aspects related to the budget. The budget distribution must reflect the **transnationality** of the project and allow each partner

²⁰ The amounts reimbursed by the Programme correspond to 80% of the costs declared by the partners, which, except for lump sums and flat-rates amounts, must all have been previously **incurred AND paid** by the beneficiaries.

²¹ In order to reduce payment times as much as possible, the Interreg MED Programme has opted since 2014 for a payment of funds directly to project partners. The Lead Partner receives only the amounts corresponding to its own expenditures, the rest being paid directly to the partners by the Accounting Authority, on the bank account indicated in the Jems monitoring system.

to have **enough budget** to implement its activities according to the distribution of tasks as foreseen in the proposal.

Before filling in the form on the system, each partner must agree individually, and at least with the LP (in charge of data entry in the monitoring tool), on:

- the origin and amount of co-financing provided by its structure,
- its share of the preparation costs.
- the method of reporting travel costs chosen for the staff of its structure and which will apply for any participation in subsequent Interreg-MED projects: in accordance with the eligibility rules of the Programme presented in the dedicated chapter, each partner will have to choose a method of declaration of travel and accommodation costs which will not be subject to any change after the start of its first project and will remain effective for the implementation of all the Interreg Euro-MED projects in which it will participate. No derogation to this rule will be accepted and no change of method will be accepted after the start of the first project. A verification of this point will be carried out by the JS during the evaluation of the applications.
- the results of state aid analysis. i.e a self-assessment on state aid is foreseen in Jems and must be compiled by the LP in close cooperation with the partner. Where appropriate, the state aid scheme applicable to the structure is agreed with the partner.

The JS strongly recommends that Lead Partners applicants agree on these 4 points with each of their partners. The content of the form should be re-checked by them as soon as the budget entry on Jems is completed and before validation of the proposal. Indeed, all the data related to the above-mentioned elements will be locked once the application is submitted, part of those elements are included in the partner declaration signed by each candidate.

If the project is approved, any change in these elements soon after the decision of the Programme Committee is taken would have a significant impact on project's start-up phase.

b) Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness

As set out in the Financial Regulation 2018/1046, certain key principles govern the use of EU funds and must be considered when preparing proposals and implementing projects:

- *The principle of economy* which requires that the resources used by the organisation concerned in the pursuit of its activities shall be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality, and at the best price.
- *The principle of efficiency* which concerns the best relationship between the resources employed, the activities undertaken and the achievement of objectives
- *The principle of effectiveness* which concerns the extent to which the objectives pursued are achieved through the activities undertaken.

Keeping these three principles of good financial management in mind when drawing up the project budget (and incurring expenditure) is essential to build a **reasonable and realistic** budget. Indeed, the total project budget must be in line with the work plan: the planned activities, deliverables, outputs and results, as well as the duration of the project and the number of partners must be taken into account when developing the budget.

c) Budget in Euros

The project budget must be **drawn up in euros**, as well as any declarations of expenditure that are sent to the Managing Authority / Joint Secretariat if the project is approved²².

d) Costs categories to be considered

The project budget must be structured around the **6 costs categories eligible for the Programme**, the contents of which are detailed in the eligibility of expenditure chapter of this Manual.

²² Details of how to convert expenditure in currencies other than euros are provided in the "Financial Issues" section of this Manual

Point of attention: Limiting external expertise and services costs

The Programme does not set a formal limit for the costs related to the "external expertise and services" cost category. It is however recommended **not to exceed 50% of the partner's total eligible budget** for this line as the project is supposed to be implemented directly by the partners. Beneficiaries should also bear in mind that costs related to speakers, guest speakers, etc. (including costs related to the participation of associated partners-Travel & Accommodation) in the project activities fall under this budget category.

e) Location of activities

It is expected that the activities implemented by the project are mainly targeted on the Interreg Euro-MED territory for a better impact on the cooperation area, nonetheless:

- Activities carried out and travels made outside the Programme area but in an EU Member State are possible as long as they are in line with the project objectives.
- Activities and travel **outside the Programme area and outside the EU** are eligible only if they are **previously authorised** by the MA/JS.

f) Activities to budget

Communication component: no dedicated work package (WP) for communication is foreseen in the Application Form. However, communication activities must be budgeted for. Please note that you should not foresee any budget for the creation of a project logo, a subscription to a collaborative project management tool, the development, hosting and maintenance of your project website²³. Indeed, the Programme provides the following services to all selected projects: logo, collaborative project management tool (Basecamp), website (WordPress). Please note that the human resources needed to manage the website, the social networks

²³ See Chapter "Eligibility of expenditure" of this Manual - ineligible expenditure

and the Basecamp animation should be budgeted. Be careful not to underestimate them.

Management component: no WP dedicated to project management is foreseen in the application form, however, management activities must be budgeted for. The human resources needed for the implementation and coordination of project activities must be considered, as well as the reporting activities (activities and finances) or the implementation/development of any tools needed to monitor these elements.

NB: When working on your project proposal, please keep in mind that the following activities should be included in the category "external expertise and services": audits to be carried out by partners (National Controller), project evaluation, possible subcontracting of management and communication activities, translation, organisation of project events and meetings, travel and accommodation of speakers, institutional representatives, and possible associated partners.

In addition, mandatory activities to be carried out by projects are mentioned in the dedicated section of the Manual²⁴, these activities must be known by the partners and LP to be properly budgeted in the work plan. It should be noted that additional elements may also appear in the Terms of Reference of each call.

***Carbon offsetting:** a tool for calculating the carbon offsetting of activities will be made available to projects to calculate the carbon footprint of their activities. An estimate of these offsetting activities should be made by the applicants to dedicate a part of the project budget to them.*

***Contribution to the Results Amplification Strategy and to the Programme activities:** each project must foresee the resources necessary for its contribution to the Results Amplification Strategy and to the Programme activities, according to the type of project to which it belongs. As a minimum, each project must foresee the participation in 2 events per year and periodic exchange of information between projects and between project and Programme.*

²⁴ See Chapter "Designing project activities" of this Manual

g) VAT

According to Article 64 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060, Value Added Tax (VAT) is non eligible, except:

- for operations the total cost of which is below EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT);
- for operations the total cost of which is at least EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT) where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;

In the framework of Interreg Euro-MED projects with a total cost of less than EUR 5 000 000 (including VAT), VAT is therefore eligible as part of project expenditure and all partners can foresee their expenditure with VAT.

DRAFT

I. E. Submitting my application

This chapter outlines the main principles to be followed when submitting an application to the Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 Programme.

It is reminded that the specific elements of each call relating to the expected partnership, the available budget, the priorities covered as well as the modalities for the selection of proposals are detailed in the Terms of Reference of each call.

i. Jems: the Programme's online monitoring tool

Applications to the Programme's calls for projects are **100% dematerialized** and must be submitted via the Programme's online monitoring tool, Jems²⁵ (Joint Electronic Monitoring System), accessible at the following address: <https://jems.interreg-euro-med.eu/>.

The Application Form is completed and submitted on Jems. Similarly, **the supporting documents required for the application must be completed (and scanned, when an original version manually signed exist) and uploaded** as separate files to the monitoring tool. The submitted documents must be named in an intelligible way in French or English and cannot exceed the size of 50Mb.

The content of the templates provided by the Programme and, where applicable, generated via Jems may not be modified or amended in any way. All templates requiring a signature must be dated and signed (handwritten or electronic signature) to be considered valid.

The electronic signature is considered valid for the Programme as soon as it is recognized at national and European level; in case of doubt as to the format, it is recommended to **contact your National Authority** (or the one of the partner concerned) to ensure the validity of your documents before submitting them to the Programme.

²⁵ In particular, Jems will be used for project's administrative follow-up, for entering expenditure and reporting activities (partner and project levels), checking expenditure and certifying it.. Each of the chapters of the Manual involving the use of Jems contains the necessary indications on the functionalities of the tool that must be activated. In addition, a general presentation of Jems and its functionalities can be found in Annex D and guides will be provided for each of the above-mentioned steps.

NB: in case of delegation of signature and for any document, a proof of delegation must be uploaded with the signed document.

If applicable, the original paper version of the documents (signed and stamped where required) must be kept by the signatory in the project archive file.

ii. Submission of proposals

The Lead Partner is responsible for the application procedure on behalf of the whole project partnership. In order to access the Application Form, he/she must have access to the monitoring tool, [Jems](#). This access is created by the Lead Partner²⁶ or provided by the Joint Secretariat depending on the type of call concerned (open or restricted).

Attention! It is important to ensure that the address used for the creation of the account is easily consultable by the applicant(s) since this address will automatically be used by the system to receive any notification, confirmation, etc.

The application procedure of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme generally consists of **two main steps**: the submission of an Application Form, to be filled in and validated in the Jems monitoring system, and, in a second step, the production of several compulsory annexes, which will be uploaded in the system: thus, please note that for each call **two different deadlines must be respected**.

a) Application Form

The Application Form must be filled in on the Jems monitoring tool in one of the two languages of the Programme, i.e. English or French.

For each call, a courtesy version (Word format) of the Application Form is made available to the public **for information**. This document specifies the content expected in the different sections of the form and **can in no way be considered as a valid document for the submission of an application** by the Lead Partner. In addition, a Jems Guide containing indications and recommendations for completing and

²⁶ Once you have entered your first and last name, email address and password, a confirmation link will be sent to the email address you have entered to activate your account. You will then be able to access the call for proposals for which you wish to apply. It is strongly recommended to use only one email address for all Euro-MED projects.

submitting the application form can be downloaded from the Interreg Euro-MED Programme website²⁷.

A "pre-submission check"²⁸ is provided by the system. This check is activated by the Lead Partner and provides an overview of any missing or inconsistent data.

- A green tick indicates that the chapter has no anomalies;
- A red exclamation mark indicates chapters that need to be corrected by Lead Applicants before submitting the form to the system.

The Lead Partner should **ensure that the check is run after validation of each key chapter of the form**: if anomalies are identified, the relevant sections of the form should be modified, and the check should be re-run; major blocking points affecting the application may be flagged and would require significant revision and correction work in case of erroneous or missing elements.

It is important to bear in mind that an application cannot be submitted on Jems until the pre-submission check is valid.

When all sections of the Application Form have been corrected and completed, the Lead Partner can launch a last pre-submission check.

Once the pre-submission check is validated, the Lead Partner must submit the application on Jems **before the deadline set for the call. The submission will only be effective after pressing the "Submit project application" button.**

When the submission is made, a confirmation e-mail is automatically sent by Jems to the contact person entered in the Application Form (it is therefore imperative to ensure that the e-mail address is correct **before final validation** of the Application Form).

If the Lead Partner encounters any problem in filling in or validating the Application Form on Jems, it is imperative to contact the Joint Secretariat (programme@interreg-euro-med.eu) before the deadline for the submission of applications (**Brussels time CET/CEST**).

After submission, it is no longer possible to modify the Application Form.

²⁷ [Documents & tools - Programme Interreg Euro-MED \(interreg-euro-med.eu\)](#)

²⁸ the pre-submission check is a feature set up on Jems, to flag, before validation, any missing information or information requiring significant revision or correction. This feature should be activated by the LP when redacting the proposal.

Lead Partners are invited to keep the e-mail sent by the system confirming the time of submission of the Application Form (**Brussels time CET/CEST**).

b) Annexes

The submission confirmation page of the Application Form must be signed and uploaded in PDF format in the online monitoring tool of the Euro-MED Interreg Programme, Jems.²⁹ (**NB:** only the page from the submitted form is a valid document).

Each partner must upload from Jems³⁰, fill in and sign a **co-financing letter** generated via Jems and which must be annexed to the submitted Application Form. Before completing/signing the partner declarations, partners must check the information contained in the document.

The Lead Partner must ensure that the signed documents are provided by all project partners and comply with the standard templates and signature standards.

Associated partners must sign an "**associated partner declaration**" generated via Jems confirming their willingness to take part in project activities according to the conditions of their status.

²⁹ This information needs to be confirmed by the team working on Jems.

³⁰ Depending on Jems evolutions, some documents should be generated directly from Jems

I. F. Assessment of proposals and results

This section presents a summary of the main stages for processing your proposal once it has been presented to the Joint Secretariat.

The elements that are more specific to each call and that relate to the eligibility criteria as well as to the modalities of selection of the proposals are detailed in the technical datasheet integrated in the Terms of Reference of each call for proposals.

i. Appraisal of proposals

After it is submitted, each Interreg Euro-MED proposal is subject to an assessment procedure consisting of at least two stages, guaranteeing the principles of transparency and equal treatment and described below:

- **Administrative check and eligibility** of the Application Form (**Annex I** of the Terms of Reference of the different calls)
- **Quality assessment phase** (in one or two phases depending on the elements provided in **Annex III** of the Terms of Reference of the different calls)

Each of these stages may lead to the final elimination of the proposal. The Programme Committee is responsible for the decision concerning each stage.

The absence of any document or an error in its drafting will be presented to the Programme Committee and their submission may be included as a **condition for the signature of the Subsidy Contract** (based on **Annex II** of the Terms of Reference of the different calls for proposals: list of pre-contractual criteria). If, **two months** after the selection of the projects, the problems related to the compulsory annexes have not been solved, the Programme Committee may decide to deprogramme the project or to withdraw the partner concerned.

Lead Partner will be informed of missing or erroneous documents, so that these points can be corrected as soon as possible.

ii. Project's selection and communication of results to Lead Partners

Decisions on projects funding are taken by the Euro-Med Interreg Programme Committee on the basis of the results of the assessment described above and the availability of the budget for each call.

After validation of the Programme Committee's decision, the Lead Partner of the submitted proposal receives a communication from the Managing Authority indicating whether the proposal is *accepted (without modification)*, *accepted with conditions* or *rejected*. The communication shall contain the approval decision and, where appropriate, the conditions to be fulfilled within a specified time limit or the reasons for rejection.

In case of disagreement with the decision of the Programme Committee and for information on the recourse procedures available to applicants, please refer to the Section "Key Legal Mechanisms", Chapter "Recourse and Complaints Resolution" of this Manual.