

ANNEX I

Work programme for 2024 in the framework of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund for the use of technical assistance

1. Introduction

On the basis of the objectives given in Article 35 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 ('CPR') and Articles 58(2) and 92b(3) of Regulation (EU) No 2013/1303, this work programme contains the actions to be financed and the budget breakdown for year 2024 as follows:

- a) for grants (implemented under direct management): point 2,
- b) for procurement (implemented under direct management): point 3,
- c) for actions implemented under indirect management: point 4,
- d) for other actions or expenditure: point 5: AMI-list experts and administrative agreements.

Legal bases

Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund 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, and in particular Articles 7(2) and 35 thereof.

Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, and in particular Article 58 thereof.

Budget lines

05 02 02 00-European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)-Operational technical assistance
05 02 05 02-NGEU-ERDF-Operational technical assistance-Financing under REACT-EU
05 03 02 00-Cohesion Fund-Operational technical assistance

Objectives pursued

At the initiative of the Commission, technical assistance may support preparatory, monitoring, control, audit, evaluation, communication including corporate communication on the political priorities of the Union, visibility and all administrative and technical assistance actions necessary for the implementation of the CPR and, where appropriate, with third countries.

Expected results

Technical assistance will result in

- Active contribution to deliver Commission priorities (Jobs, Growth and Investment, Digital Single Market, Energy Union etc.)
- Development of Cohesion policy and establishment of close links to other EU policies
- Demonstration and dissemination of the EU added value of Cohesion policy
- Territorial cohesion in Europe
- Sound management of the Funds
- Improvement of the performance of the internal processes

Efforts will be made to ensure synergies and complementarities between technical assistance and technical support under the Technical Support Instrument.

Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming

In accordance with Article 5(1)(b) of the CPR, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund shall support the policy objective ‘a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility’.

Member States should allocate an important part of the ERDF (at least 30%) and of the Cohesion Fund (at least 37%) contribution to expenditure related to the achievement of the climate objectives set for the EU budget and to the mainstreaming of biodiversity actions in the Union policies.

As the actions of technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission, in accordance with the CPR, are designed to support the implementation of the Funds, in combination with the objectives of the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund as mentioned above, they will contribute to climate and biodiversity mainstreaming.

2. Grants

The global budgetary envelope reserved for grants in 2024 is estimated at EUR 18 550 000 of which EUR 16 687 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05.020200 and EUR 1 863 000 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05.030200.

Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming

As the actions of technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission, in accordance with the CPR, are designed to support the implementation of the Funds, in combination with the objectives of the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund as mentioned above, they will contribute to climate and biodiversity mainstreaming.

The activities under this chapter will contribute significantly to these objectives and will help meet the relevant climate concerns.

2.1. Contribution to Media Pluralism: call for partnerships with media

Type of applicants targeted by the call for proposals

Beneficiaries will be media organisations / news agencies, non-profit organisations, universities and educational institutions, research centres and think-tanks, associations of European interest, private entities and public authorities (national, regional and local), with the exception of the authorities in charge of the implementation of Cohesion policy.

Description of the activities to be funded under the call for proposals

Call for proposals for funding information measures promoting Cohesion policy and cohesion related investments and reforms and media pluralism at the local level, in the language of citizens.

The main aim is to provide support for the production and dissemination of information and content linked to EU Cohesion policy.

Deliverables could include TV and radio reportages, analysis, news items, events in various formats, and more; all promoting EU cohesion policy while respecting complete editorial independence of the actors involved.

Implementation

This action will be implemented directly by DG REGIO

2.2. Eurostat Geospatial data

Type of applicants targeted by the direct award

Grants will be provided to National Statistical Institutes or other national authorities in accordance with Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009¹.

The grants will be awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of point (d) of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation, i.e. awarded to bodies identified by a basic act, within the meaning of Article 58 of the Financial Regulation, as beneficiaries or to bodies designated by Member States, under their responsibility, where those Member States are identified by a basic act as beneficiaries.

Description of the activities

The grants will finance the collection, update and harmonisation of geospatial datasets for key issues linked to cohesion policy (transport, health, education...).

Implementation

The action will be implemented by DG ESTAT via a co-delegation Type II, according to

¹ Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics and repealing Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1101/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transmission of data subject to statistical confidentiality to the Statistical Office of the European Communities, Council Regulation (EC) No 322/97 on Community Statistics, and Council Decision 89/382/EEC, Euratom establishing a Committee on the Statistical Programmes of the European Communities (Text with relevance for the EEA and for Switzerland) (OJ L 87, 31.3.2009, p. 164).

Commission Decision C(2022) 9304 final of 15 December 2022 on the internal rules for the implementation of the Commission section of the general budget of the European Union.

2.3. Rule of Law assessments in the EU and enlargement countries 2024-2028

Type of applicants targeted by the direct award

A grant will be provided to The World Justice Project.

The World Justice Project is a global, independent, leading NGO that has developed and applied independent assessments of judicial systems at national and regional level using a unique methodology that they have developed. It requires a high level of specialisation, technical competence and experience to apply this method. There is no competing project at this level of quality and coverage. Another organisation could not replicate this method. As a result, only the World Justice Project can do this work.

The grant will be awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of point (f) of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation, i.e. awarded for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers, on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals.

Description of the activities

The World Justice Project will collect, summarise, and analyse information in each of the 27 EU Member States, the 10 enlargement countries as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan (39 countries) and include it in the World Justice Project Rule of Index reports of the years 2024 to 2028, as well as the World Justice Project data portal.

After the publication of each World Justice Project Rule of Law Index report, the World Justice Project team will organise meetings and presentations of the Index and its findings in Europe, as well as meetings with European constituencies to discuss the rule of law in the region.

In addition to publishing the data from the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index on World Justice Project's Index data portal, the results for the EU will also be shared in a separate portal with (a) the index scores for the 27 + 10 + 2 countries covered in the grant and (b) some of the disaggregated GPP and QRQ data used for the construction of the index in these countries, organised thematically.

The team will work with the EU Joint Research Centre to produce a sensitivity analysis.

Implementation

This action will be implemented directly by DG REGIO

2.4. 32nd Homologues Group Meeting

Type of applicants targeted by the direct award

Because of the treatment and exchange of confidential and sensitive information during the meeting of the Homologues Group between the representatives of the Ministries of Finance of the Member States, the European Court of Auditors and the European Commission, the

organisation of this meeting is limited to the national bodies of control and audit. These entities have decided to designate annually (during the meeting of year n-1) the body amongst them that will ensure the organisation of the meeting for year n.

The host country for the 32nd Homologues Group Meeting should be confirmed at the 31st Homologues Group meeting.

The grant will be awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of point (c) of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation, i.e. awarded to bodies with a de jure or de facto monopoly or to bodies designated by Member States, under their responsibility, where those Member States are in a de jure or de facto monopoly situation.

Description of the activities

This grant will finance the 32nd Annual Meeting of the European financial controllers and auditors (“Homologues Group”). It is the annual gathering of representatives of Member States and the Commission, so as to discuss issues relating to controls of the management of the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund, such as examine the annual control report, the audit opinion and the audit strategy, and to exchange views on issues relating to improvement of the management and control.

Implementation

This action will be implemented directly by DG REGIO

2.5. Youth4Cooperation: the future of cooperation

Type of applicants targeted by the call for proposals

Beneficiaries will be youth organisations or regional associations currently working with young people.

Description of the activities to be funded under the call for proposals

The grant will finance the organisation of communication campaigns, surveys and consultation meetings / workshops to reach a wide young people audience, already knowledgeable about Interreg or macro-regional strategies, but also new youngsters interested in getting closer to the European cooperation world. The voices of young people will feed into the wider consultation on post-2027 territorial cooperation policy.

Implementation

The action will be implemented directly by DG REGIO

2.6. Interreg Volunteer Youth

Type of applicants targeted by the direct award

The grant will be awarded to the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). AEBR is a registered association with the exclusive and direct purpose to promote cross-border cooperation in Europe. AEBR is a civil society body capable of conducting and

promoting projects in the intended shape and scope. Its members are European border and cross-border regions in Member States of the EU or the Council of Europe. Since its creation in the early 1970s, AEBR has been establishing and refining a general network of border and cross-border regions, which is not limited to the members of AEBR or the EU with significant expertise and experience.

The AEBR Secretariat's reputation, knowledge, quality control and administrative capacity to coordinate and manage cross-border cooperation pilot projects coupled with the cross-border specific knowledge can ensure successful implementation of this project.

The actions proposed by this project have specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its reputation, independence, accountability, technical competence, its high degree of specialisation and its administrative power. Thus, AEBR is the only civil society body capable of conducting the actions of the project in the intended shape and scope.

The grant will be awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of point (f) of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation, i.e. awarded for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers, on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals.

Description of the activities

AEBR will perform the following tasks: project management strategy and administration, building and updating a database of potential candidates, screening of the database and selection of the candidates who meet the criteria requested by host organisations, assessment of the volunteering project submitted by the Interreg programmes and projects, matching of volunteers with host organisations, preparation and training, deployment in the field, organisational and individual support for Citizens' Engagement Activities, implementation and reinforcement of the communication strategy of IVY, monitoring and evaluation of activities and costs.

Implementation

The action will be implemented directly by DG REGIO.

2.7. Support to energy cross-border communities

Type of applicants targeted by the direct grant

The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) are the two bodies targeted by the direct award.

The two associations are co-signatories of the "European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance", an initiative which aims to improve the life of European citizens living in the EU's border regions. The Committee of the Regions is amongst the other signatories of this Alliance. This will ensure the specialised knowledge and set of skills that are required to perform the action.

AEBR is the only organisation in Europe with a direct mandate for pan-European representation of border regions. AEBR was founded in 1971 by the first border regions which had started cross-border cooperation in Europe after the Second World War, strengthening the integration of citizens across national boundaries. Today it counts some

100 members from the EU and its neighbouring countries. AEBR's mission and work are inspired by the European Charter for Border and Cross-Border Regions.

MOT is an association established in 1997 bringing together several entities with a territorial scope on border regions. It has solid experience and competence in the production of knowledge and sharing of experiences of cross-border territories.

Across Europe, France is the only Member State which has set up a government led organisation (MOT) mandated to specifically support cross-border cooperation. Since 1997, MOT serves several French Institutions such as ministries, the Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires (ANCT) as well as the Luxembourg Ministry for Energy and Territorial Planning. It has gathered unique combination of technical expertise and competence in all cross-border cooperation fields, from implementation of cross-border projects to proposals for legislation.

The activities to be performed under this grant require a very specific capacity of managing sub-grants and the related competitive application process. AEBR has proven experience in implementing similar actions for which those specific capacities were required, such as the REGIO initiatives "Interreg Volunteer Youth" and the "B-solutions". MOT brings very specific capacity of technical assessment of cross-border institutional cooperation, evidenced namely by its analysis on "the impact of border-related measures taken by Member-States in the fight against COVID-19".

Neither AEBR nor MOT have individually the requested expertise. As a result, these two bodies will work complementarily, combining AEBR's expertise as regards sub-grant actions relating to border obstacles (including in the field of energy) and MOT's co-development methodology in border territories (i.e. collaborative multi-stakeholder cross-border initiatives, including public authorities). These are key components of cross-border energy communities, given their complex development framework.

The relevance of this combined approach has already been recognised by the Commission in other initiatives, such as the Cross-Border Crisis Response Integrated Initiative (CB CRII).

The grant will be awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of point (f) of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation, i.e. awarded for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers, on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals.

Description of the activities to be funded under the call for proposals

The beneficiaries prepare and launch a call for proposals targeted at cross-border regions; these are the stakeholders who will receive support to launch and create their (quasi) cross-border energy communities. These tasks include the management of the contracts with these stakeholders, dissemination and promotion of the results. The financial support to be granted to the stakeholders creating the energy communities is included in the value of this action.

The grant will fund the implementation of cross-border energy communities. This does not include the costs of infrastructure and equipment (e.g. solar panels), but rather technical expertise (e.g. technical studies, legal analysis), and the costs associated with setting up the cooperation (e.g. promotion campaigns for engaging citizens to the community; cost with organisation of events and meetings).

Implementation

The action will be implemented directly by DG REGIO

3. Procurement

The global budgetary envelope reserved for procurement contracts in 2024 is estimated at EUR 76 728 143 of which EUR 62 846 941 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05.020200; EUR 3 900 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line REACT-EU 05.020502-NGEU and EUR 9 981 202 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05.030200.

Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming

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3.1. Service contracts

General description of the contracts envisaged

The procurement budget will be used to implement service contracts (both direct and specific under framework contracts) that will cover:

- Audit
- Communication and Publication
- Evaluation
- Informatics (IT)
- Meetings and Conferences
- Studies, statistics and data collection
- Technical and other administrative assistance to Member States
- Translations (externalised)
- Trainings (externalised)

These procurement contracts, following several open and negotiated procedures, may support preparatory, monitoring, control, audit, evaluation, communication including corporate communication on the political priorities of the Union, visibility and all administrative and technical assistance actions necessary for the implementation of the CPR and, where appropriate, with third countries, at the initiative of the Commission.

IT development and procurement strategy choices will be subject to pre-approval by the European Commission Information Technology and Cybersecurity Board.

Implementation

Part of the procurement budget will be co-delegated via a co-delegation Type II, according to Commission Decision C(2023) 8600 final of 15 December 2023 amending Commission Decision C(2022) 9304 final on the internal rules for the implementation of the Commission section of the general budget of the European Union:

- *Audit*

To DG EMPL to contribute to the ARACHNE project that is developing, testing and implementing a risk scoring tool.

To DIGIT as a contribution for the corporate ARACHNE IT project.

- *Communication and Publications*

To the Publications Office for publications and printing services and for EC Library subscriptions;

To DG COMM for contributions to the Corporate Communication;

To DG CNECT as a contribution to the Kohesio project.

- *IT*

To DG DIGIT for corporate IT services and for some services not covered by corporate baseline services;

To DG BUDG for ABAC DBD links and for SUMMA extension;

To DG EMPL for IT audit tool MAPAR.

- *Statistics and Data Collection*

To DG ESTAT for access to geospatial data.

- *Technical and other administrative assistance to Member States*

To DG AGRI for running the Brussels based Facility for Broadband Competence Offices.

- *Translations*

To DGT.

The rest of the procurement budget will be implemented directly by DG REGIO.

4. Actions implemented in indirect management

The global budgetary envelope reserved for actions to be implemented under indirect management in 2024 is estimated at EUR 26 600 000 of which EUR 22 610 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05.020200 and EUR 3 990 000 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05.030200.

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4.1. Co-operation with the World Bank

Implementing entity

The World Bank Group works in every major area of development. They provide a wide array of expertise and technical assistance and help countries to share and apply innovative knowledge and solutions to the challenges they face.

Agreements with the World Bank will be signed and implemented under indirect management, based on existing work and results from earlier contracts with the Bank and its required contacts, technical competence and legitimacy to implement these projects.

With 189 member countries, staff from over 170 countries, and offices in over 130 locations, the World Bank Group is a unique global partner that can achieve results in the intended areas of technical assistance (see below) more efficiently and effectively than any other organisation.

Description

- Catching-up regions initiative in external border regions of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

The action promotes growth and investment in external border regions of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that were already disadvantaged in their regional development and have been severely hit by the consequences of the Russian aggression towards Ukraine. It provides targeted technical assistance to competent local and regional authorities in implementing their investment strategies/projects taking into account the new situation caused by the war. It ensures that Cohesion Policy investments achieve their full impact in order not to leave these strategic border regions behind.

- Greece Sustainable Cities and Regions through Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) Technical Facility (Phase 2)

The action provides hands-on approaches to capacity building in improving the quality of strategies, plans, and projects and accelerating implementation of the ITI approach in the 2021-2027 programming period for four selected municipalities. In the proposed second phase, the action expands the cohort of cities receiving support, while continuing and deepening the engagement with the existing participant cities specifically on Thematic Area 4 (Enabling city management systems and tools).

4.2. Cooperation with the EIB – JASPERS 2024

Implementing entity

In the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, JASPERS will be implemented by the EIB and will pursue the following strategic objective: assisting in the quality and timely delivery of projects in the Cohesion Policy.

Description

JASPERS will provide targeted, advisory support to Managing Authorities and project

beneficiaries during the whole life cycle of projects starting from identification, selection, development and approval of projects financed by the Funds, as well as for the financial closing of projects and their subsequent implementation and completion.

5. Other actions or expenditure

Climate and biodiversity mainstreaming

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5.1. Expert contracts – AMI list

Amount

The amount in 2024 is estimated at EUR 1 165 000 of which EUR 994 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05.020200 and EUR 171 000 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05.030200.

Description

This action covers expenses for technical assistance provided by experts through simplified experts contracts based on the DG REGIO AMI-list².

Experts will mainly give advice on the implementation of programmes in the Member States and on the assessment of selected Cohesion Policy related topics, support with the uptake of green and nature based solutions, support with the implementation of the financial instruments, administrative capacity building etc.

5.2. Service-level agreements with the JRC

Amount

The amount in 2024 is estimated at EUR 5 065 000 of which EUR 4 419 250 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05.020200 and EUR 645 750 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05.030200.

Description

- Regional analysis and projections

This action will finance the analysis and projections for the cohesion reports and other reports that have a regional dimension to provide a better understanding of regional trends. It will

² Call for expressions of interest 2022/S 065-167519-01/04/2022 for external experts to support the implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds.

also feed the impact assessment.

- Global population trends (POPTRENDS)

This is an amendment for the ongoing administrative arrangement between DG REGIO and the JRC on global population trends (AA 35864 POPTRENDS). This action supports the production of global time series and projection of population and built-up areas. It also improves the assessment of built-up areas in Europe.

- Territorial impacts of industrial transition

This action will provide (i) an analysis on territorial aspects of industrial policy and transition; (ii) support in the fulfilment assessment of the enabling condition “Good governance of national or regional smart specialisation strategy”; and (iii) an input to establishing a single hub for the support for implementation of S3 – the new S3 Community of Practice platform of DG REGIO.

- Platform on cross-border interactions

This action will support the further development and deployment of a dedicated online public platform on cross-border (CB) interactions, which has started in 2023 under the framework of an European Parliament Pilot Project. That project included a platform on CB public services, that will be deployed by JRC. The current action aims at enlarging that by adding new layers with other types of interactions, capitalising on the results from previous actions and providing a centralised point of entry for CB stakeholders.

- Interreg MOOC in the EU academy³

REGIO contracted in 2021 a consortium of universities (and other entities) to produce a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) on Interreg (#InterregMOOC).

The action will support the integration of the Interreg MOOC into the EU Academy platform.

The ‘EU Academy’ is a project of the JRC, providing a platform which centralises different forms of training provided by the EU institutions to external and internal learners. Currently they have 400 publishers of content and above 1 million users.

³ <https://academy.europa.eu/>