



## Monitoring Committee Task Force meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> call(s) (Hotel Hilton Garden Inn, Grecinieku 25, Riga, Latvia)

4 October 2023

14:00-17:30 CET

Chaired by Ronald Lieske (MA/JS)

### Draft notes on conclusions (status 30 October 2023)

#### 1a. Expectations, approach, plan for 3<sup>rd</sup> call(s)

*Slides: AP1a\_Expectations, approach, plan for 3<sup>rd</sup> calls*

*Supporting document:*

*AP1\_Programme countries' perspectives on the third call for core and/or small projects*

*AP1a.1 Overview of MC inputs on the third call(s)*

*AP1a.2 Options for the third call(s) for applications based on the Programme countries' perspectives*

##### ▪ **Project types: order of the calls and the share of funds**

The MA/JS presented two possible options for the timelines of the call(s) (see slide 6):

- option 1: to have a small project call following the core project call;
- option 2: to have simultaneous small and core project calls.

The participants in the Task Force meeting agreed on option 1. The MA/JS received the mandate to elaborate an announcement note for the core projects call based on option 1. Additionally, the participants in the Task Force meeting agreed to earmark funds for a small project call; the amount of about 4-5 million EUR or 10% of the available budget was seen as adequate by the participants in the Task Force.

##### ▪ **Budget allocation to priorities**

The MA/JS presented three possible options for the budget allocation to the priorities in the next calls and the corresponding indicative number of core projects that could be funded (see slides 13-18):

- option 1: to stick to the budget allocation per priorities as set in the Programme document and not reallocate additional budget to Priority 2;
- option 2: to transfer 10% budget from Priority 3 to Priority 2;
- option 3: to transfer 5% of the total budget on a pro-rata basis from Priority 1 and Priority 3 to Priority 2.

The participants in the Task Force meeting agreed on option 1: no reallocation of budget to Priority 2.





### ▪ *Thematic focus of the calls*

The possible topics to focus on in the next call were displayed to the participants in the Task Force meeting (ref. supporting document “AP1a.2 Options for the third call(s) for applications based on the Programme countries’ perspectives”).

For the next announcement note on core projects, the participants in the Task Force meeting agreed to:

- have Priority 1 open for all the topics listed in the Programme document, but especially encourage the topics from the supporting documents except for the cyber security topic, which would not be supported.

In addition, the topic of preparedness for natural disasters like droughts and floods, which was originally listed within the scope of Priority 2 would be included in the frame of Programme Objective 1.1

- have Priority 3 opened exclusively for the topics from the supporting documents, which relate to addressing climate change.

Planning and setting up small-scale nuclear plants should not be supported by the Programme. However, the topic of supporting communities in dealing with energy security also related to nuclear energy could be covered within Priority 1. (This agreement is used as internal guidance for the MA/JS when consulting projects, but will not be included in the call documents.)

The MA/JS will elaborate the announcement note for core projects, including the agreed thematic focus for Priority 1 and Priority 3.

### ▪ *Timelines of the calls*

The proposed timeline for calls, reflecting the agreed option 1 (small project call following core project call) was shown to the participants in the Task Force meeting (see slide 34).

The participants in the Task Force meeting agreed on the proposed dates for the core projects’ call, with the exception of the date for the Monitoring Committee meeting, which was postponed by one week compared to the proposal:

Core projects	
Launching of the call	17 January 2024
Project idea forms/Access to BAMOS+	17 April 2024
Complete application	21 June 2024, 16:00
Assessment documents available for the Monitoring Committee	15 October 2024



Monitoring Committee meeting

13-14 November 2024

The specific timeline for the small projects' call will be discussed at a later stage.

#### ▪ **Support to applicants and feedback of the 2<sup>nd</sup> call applicants**

Some of the participants in the Task Force meeting provided the following inputs for planning the support to applicants in the next calls:

- NO asked the MA/JS to think about how to address the problem of low-quality applications in Priority 3 in the previous calls and in view of the next calls. The MA/JS would focus on the webinar on how to develop a good project. The MA/JS also offer the possibility to participate in national events targeting local authorities (either as active participation or supporting with documents).
- PL proposed that the MA/JS would prepare a tutorial on state-aid, and encouraged the MA/JS to think about other ways to improve the communication about this topic;
- PL suggested that the MA/JS would more extensively explain to applicants the common mistakes to avoid.

#### **1b. Strategic role of the Monitoring Committee in project generation and selection**

The participants in the Task Force exchanged views on how to streamline and better execute the strategic role of the Monitoring Committee during the selection process. The discussion mainly focused on the mandate of the country delegations to deviate from the position of their sub-committees, in order to achieve a consensus at the MC meeting.

#### **2. Standard hourly rates indexation**

*Slides: AP2\_Standard hourly rates indexation*

*Supporting document: AP2\_Review of hourly rates and approach of other Interreg Programmes*

The MA/JS displayed the latest EUROSTAT index data from 15 September 2023 (different than in the supporting document) and the corresponding index change (slide 4):

Country	Current rates	Updated rate	Difference
Denmark (DKK)	374	379	+5
Germany	48	47	-1
Estonia	29	27	-2
Latvia	24	24	0
Lithuania	22	24	+2



Poland (PLN)	92	101	+9
Finland	36	38	+2
Sweden (SEK)	501	506	+5
Norway (NOK)	546	553	+7

Finland, Sweden, Norway expressed that they did not receive complaints from applicants and that current rates seemed therefore sufficient. Poland stressed that it is important to find a way of acknowledging the fact that the increase in labour costs has been higher in some countries than expected at the stage of preparing the unit cost methodology. The participants in the Task Force meeting did not support changing the hourly rates according to the latest Eurostat data, which would result in lower hourly rates for Germany and Estonia. The MA/JS will therefore further cross-check the data sources in Eurostat, in view of coming back to the discussion at the MC meeting in December.

The MA/JS informed on the next steps:

- the MA/JS sent the methodology update to AA the day after the Task Force meeting (5 October);
- the opinion of the Audit Authority is expected in mid-November;
- the MC decision-making is scheduled for 1 December;
- if the MC decides to update the hourly rates, the MA/JS will update the related section in the Programme Manual.

### 3. Future of Cohesion policy and the role of Interreg – Exchange on common messages and promotion activities

*Slides: AP3\_Future Cohesion Policy and Interreg*

The Desk Officer at the European Commission informed the participants in the Task Force meeting that: at the 2023 Interreg Annual Event the European Commission will inform about the process of discussing and deciding on the future of the cohesion policy; the ex-post evaluation of the 2014-2020 programmes has started and the MA/JS has been invited to participate; The European Commission will present its position in March 2024.

The MA/JS would wish to be informed by the MC delegations, should they be discussing their position on the matter of the future of the cohesion policy and the role of Interreg, in order to formulate a joint Interreg Baltic Sea Region view.

The MA/JS proposed an MC Task Force meeting in March 2024 to launch the discussion on future directions.

Notes by Laura Ligazzolo