



Preparation for the 3rd call for small projects

Introduction

With this supporting document the MA/JS would like to collect the views of the Programme countries on the main features of the upcoming 3rd call for small projects in a systematic way. The feedback gathered will support the structured discussions during the workshop planned for the upcoming MC meeting, ensuring that the call can be effectively launched in March 2025. Considering that this is likely the final call within the Programme's current thematic priorities, it provides an opportunity to explore and test new approaches that could be relevant for the future Programme. We kindly invite all countries to share their national perspectives to help shape the workshop in a manner that addresses the needs and expectations. Input is needed on three crucial aspects of the call: its thematic scope, timeline, and the allocation of financial resources.

1. Thematic scope

In the course of the Programme implementation, the MC has selected a sufficient number of high-quality projects addressing a wide range of topics foreseen in the Programme, resulting in well-rounded coverage. Given the variety of projects that may be selected in the November MC meeting, there doesn't appear to be a strong need for the upcoming call for small projects to target any specific gaps to achieve the Programme's mission as outlined in the Programme Document.

At the same time, the experience of the MA/JS in setting the focus for the third call for core projects shows that structuring a call around multiple aspects (please refer to the thematic requirements in the announcement note of the third call for core projects) presents challenges in effectively communicating the objectives to applicants. This has resulted in mixed outcomes, making it difficult to steer applicants towards the goals envisioned by the Monitoring Committee. A more streamlined and focused approach may be needed to ensure that the call's intentions are clearly understood and met.

While the current portfolio of selected projects provides broad coverage of the Programme's objectives, the MA/JS sees an opportunity to reflect on the possible directions of the upcoming third call for small projects resulting in three possible scenarios:





Option 1: Thematically open call

A thematically open call allows applicants to work on familiar topics and build on existing knowledge. However, given that the current projects already cover a wide range of themes, there is a risk of receiving applications that repeat past approaches rather than fostering new and innovative solutions in the region.

Option 2: Call for empowering communities in the development deadlocks

A call emphasising the growing urgency to address regional disparities responding to the recent discussions on cohesion policy in Europe. It could provide a way forward for communities facing development deadlocks, focusing on the implementation of practical activities that deliver quick wins or clear initial steps to address these development deadlocks. The call could contribute to ongoing discussions about liveability, emphasising a citizen-driven approach to territorial development. It could also strengthen the understanding of the benefits of a place-based approach as a key driver of territorial cohesion. The call could provide a ground for establishing participatory approaches in the communities including youth engagement.

To ensure the success of a call for empowering communities in the development deadlocks, the MA/JS sees it crucial that the Programme Countries jointly establish a clear and comprehensive definition of the call that remains concise and provides straightforward guidance for applicants.

Option 3: call centred on another jointly agreed aspect of strategic importance for the countries

A call where applicants can work within the existing thematic objectives, but with a clear, overarching umbrella topic that ties them together in a strategic way. Unlike broad themes such as climate change, this topic should be specific and well-defined to ensure a focused approach and contribute to a common, region-wide goal.

If the Programme Countries prefer this option, the MA/JS kindly asks to provide the possible strategically relevant topics prior to the meeting by answering the questions in section 4 of this Document.

2. Timeline

When discussing the options for the third calls in autumn 2023 at the MC Task Force meeting in Riga, the MA/JS presented a possible timeline of a small call as below. Depending on the type of the call for small projects this timeline can be revised and extended to allow more time for project development, especially if a specific focus is set for the call. This adjustment could help ensure applicants gain a clearer understanding, while also helping the Programme bridge the gap to the future funding period. The extended time could allow for promoting the call during the Programme conference in May 2025. The second option still allows projects to finalise their implementation at the latest in September 2028 and timely payment of the final reports and closure of the Programme accounts.



	Option 1 (from 2023)	Option 2 (NEW!)
Launching of the call	March 2025	March 2025
Deadline for project idea forms	End of April 2025	June 2025
Deadline for complete applications	End of June 2025	End of September/ beginning of October 2025
MC meeting: decision on projects	Beginning of November 2025	First half of 2026

3. Allocation of financial resources

The Monitoring Committee set aside around EUR 5 million ERDF in priorities 1 and 3 for the third call of small projects. In addition to that, EUR 2.9 million ERDF remained from the munition call (C3.1). Further, depending on the selection of projects by the MC in call C3.2, around EUR 0.4 million might remain in priority 3. Thus, in total, EUR 8.3 million ERDF are available for the third call of small projects:

Priority	ERDF (in million EUR)		
	Available funds set aside for S3	Available funds remaining after C3.1 and C3.2 (estimated)	Funding available for S3
1	1.5	0	1.5
2	0	2.9	2.9
3	3.5	0.4	3.9
Total	5.0	3.3	8.3

The available funding in priorities 2 and 3 is higher than in priority 1. At the same time, there is a traditionally high interest in priority 1. The MC may decide to make use of the budget flexibility to meet the higher demand in priority 1 and e.g. offer an equal amount of funding in each priority:

Priority	ERDF (in million EUR)		
	Funding available for S3	Moving funds (Example)	Potential funding available for S3
1	1.5	+1.2	2.7
2	2.9	-0.1	2.8
3	3.9	-1.1	2.8
Total	8.3	0	8.3

Further, depending on the selection of projects by the MC in call C3.2, around EUR 370,000 Norwegian funding might remain available for all priorities in the small project call.



4. Questions to the Programme countries

1. Thematic scope
 - A. What is your preferred option for the thematic scope of the call?
 - B. If you chose option 3, please share with us the overarching umbrella topic that you find strategically relevant to focus the call on.
 - C. Do you have any further considerations regarding the thematic scope of the call that you want to share?
2. Timeline
 - A. Which of the two proposed timelines do you find the most suitable for the call?
 - B. Do you have any further considerations regarding the timeline of the call that you want to share?
3. Allocation of financial resources
 - A. What is your preferred allocation of funding? Would you like to keep the original allocation of funding in each priority or do you prefer a different allocation?
 - B. Do you have any further considerations regarding the financial resources of the call that you want to share?

