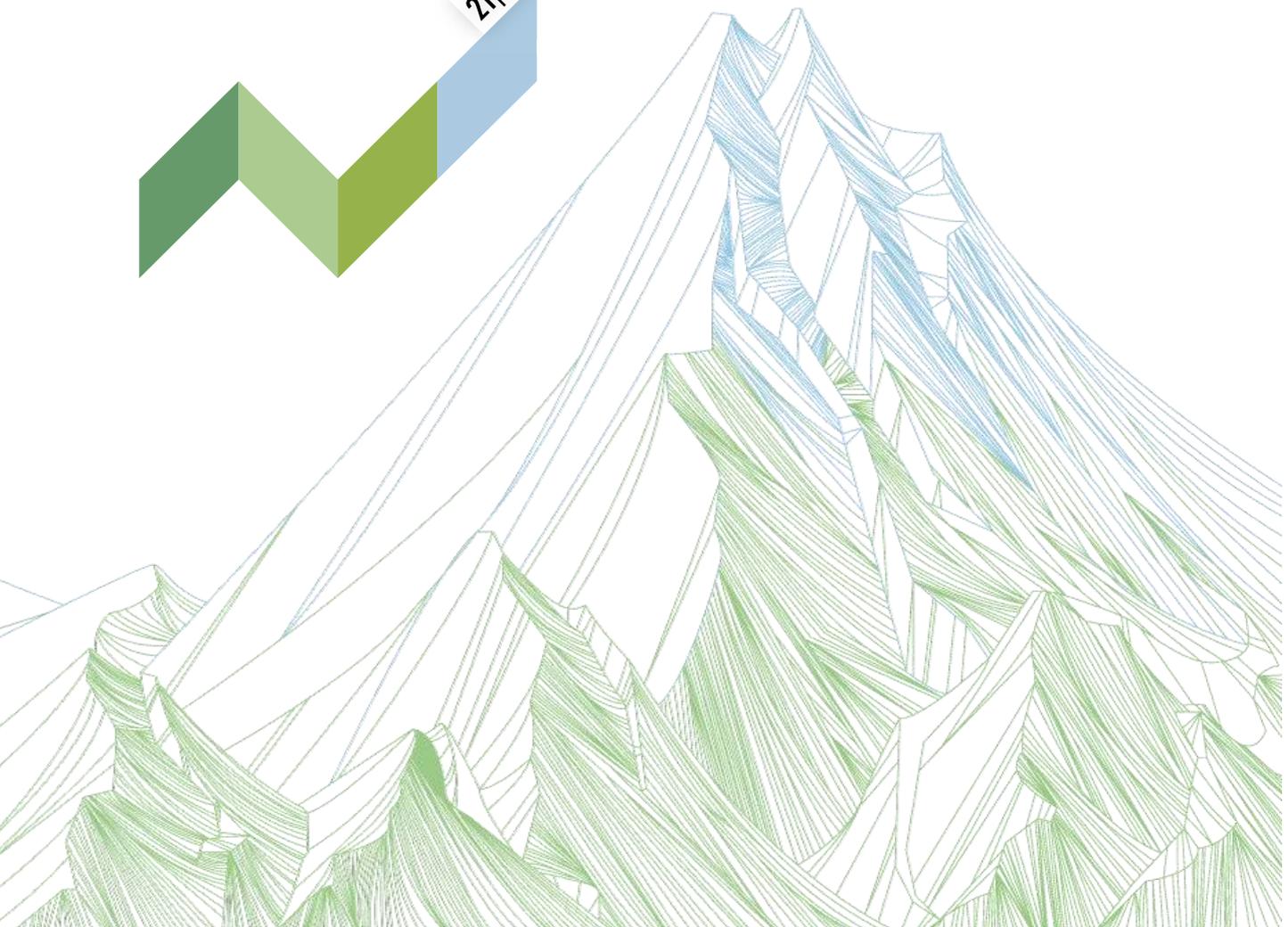


# Terms of reference

## First call for classic project proposals

19 November 2021

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## Disclaimer

These terms of reference have been approved by the members appointed to the programme committee (PC) of the Interreg Alpine Space 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 PC might take other decisions than the provisional one. This may also have effects on the content of the terms of reference and project selection process and criteria.

As long as the programme is not approved by the EC, all decisions taken by the members appointed to the PC of the 2021-2027 Alpine Space programme are under provisional effectiveness. Upon approval of the programme, the decisions will become effective (in case the then formally established PC does not decide otherwise).

Nevertheless, in order to approve and implement first projects as soon as possible, we are pleased to open the first call for project proposals.

For further information on the programming process, please visit the [programme website](#) or consult the network of [Alpine Space contact points \(ACP\)](#), the Joint Secretariat (JS) or the Managing Authority (MA).

## What is the mission of the Interreg Alpine Space Programme 2021-2027

The Interreg Alpine Space programme 2021-2027, is an EU transnational cooperation programme funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation objective of the EU Cohesion Policy.

The programme is anchored on several EU policy initiatives, including the European Green Deal, the Territorial Agenda 2030 and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). The **mission of the programme** is to be at the forefront of the transition to a unique, carbon neutral and climate resilient Alpine region. The programme will **foster the integration of sustainable economic development, societal well-being and the preservation of biodiversity**. To do so, it will bring together stakeholders from different sectors and regions to work on innovative and pioneering ideas and create the benefit for those who live and work in the Alpine region.

The programme partner states will invest **EUR 107 million ERDF** to co-finance transnational cooperation projects promoted by public and private organisations from seven Alpine countries.

The programme cooperation area is aligned with the one of the macro-regional strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP). This is a deliberate effort to **strengthen the coherence and complementarity between both initiatives** and, at the same time, support the path towards a climate-neutral territory.

## Which challenges require transnational cooperation?

Europe is facing several ongoing mega-trends to which the Alpine region is not immune. Globalisation, climate change and digitalisation are some of the most important ones. Their acceleration impacts economies and societies, which calls for adequate responses from stakeholders working across borders.

**Climate change** is paving in its own way the next phase of globalisation. Even though the area is currently already experiencing the first direct impacts through extreme weather events, the impacts on ecosystems, territories and economies are often uncertain and some are not yet known. The implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures are amongst the priorities of governments and civil society organisations.

The impact brought by **digitalisation** on people's everyday life is also challenging and demanding. Digitalisation offers a considerable amount of options for cooperation, both in terms of opportunities and constraints that need to be assessed and weighted up to achieve carbon neutrality. To reach the latter, the potential of **circular economy** is key and needs to be further exploited and supported.

Coupled with this, is the impact brought by a number of transformative forces that shape the way people live and do business. The rapid **urbanisation** across the Alpine region has led to population decline in rural areas and impacts the availability of services of general interest. Equally important is the fact that

urbanisation has made it more difficult to public authorities to manage growth and **land use interests in urban and peri-urban areas**. As cities become more populous and urbanised, the demand for energy, food and water has risen steadily. The Alpine region has a finite amount of natural resources to satisfy the demand, which also calls for **place-based approaches** to enable and support the transition towards **energy efficiency** and the intelligent use of renewable energy.

The Alpine region has a long-standing tradition of cooperation through a variety of formats. **All initiatives underline the need for greater coordination between different stakeholders and the alignment of resources and strategies to address challenges that know no borders**. Still, there is scope for improvement in multi-level governance.

In order to take a step forward in **territorial integration**, the programme will act as a driver for stakeholders who are willing to put into practice fresh ideas on **climate resilience, carbon neutrality, innovation and governance**. The programme is therefore interested in supporting projects that grasp opportunities for economic growth or take stock and capitalise on achievements in place. The ultimate goal is to **make the Alpine region greener and smarter**, and help advance actions in the policy fields covered by EUSALP.

The summary of all thematic priorities and specific objectives (SO) covered in the programme are presented in the table below:

	1 CLIMATE RESILIENT AND GREEN ALPINE REGION	2 CARBON NEUTRAL AND RESOURCE SENSITIVE ALPINE REGION	3 INNOVATION AND DIGITALISATION SUPPORTING A GREEN ALPINE REGION	4 COOPERATIVELY MANAGED AND DEVELOPED ALPINE REGION
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	Promoting climate change adaption and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions	Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy	Reaping the benefits of digitalisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities	

For a detailed description of contents of each priority and specific objectives, including information on the main challenges, type of actions and the expected contribution to EUSALP, please refer to the [Interreg programme](#).

## Which types of projects does the programme support?

For the 2021-2027 period, the programme partner states will follow distinctive approaches to cooperation depending on the thematic priorities (priorities 1, 2 and 3) and multi-level governance (priority 4). For the thematic priorities, the programme will offer the possibility to submit so-called classic projects, i.e. projects with characteristics as in the previous periods, and so-called small-scale projects, which is a novelty in this period. In relation to multi-level governance, the programme will provide funding for the EUSALP technical support structure and for small-scale projects.

All projects are expected to address the above-mentioned issues and contribute to innovative solutions. With their activities, projects concretely contribute to reach the objectives of the programme. The approaches can be new, even experimental, the programme is therefore particularly suited for testing new methods in a transnational network. The ready to use developed solutions and results are addressed to defined target groups.

Transnational cooperation projects bring together project partners from the seven countries participating in the programme, to work on a shared challenge and achieve innovative solutions that can be applied transnationally but also regionally or locally. The development of these joint solutions requires enthusiasm and commitment during project development and implementation. Transnational cooperation enables the establishment of strong and lasting ties with partners in other Alpine regions.

These terms of references are addressing the expectations for classic projects. For information on the expectations for small-scale projects, please consult the specific terms of reference.

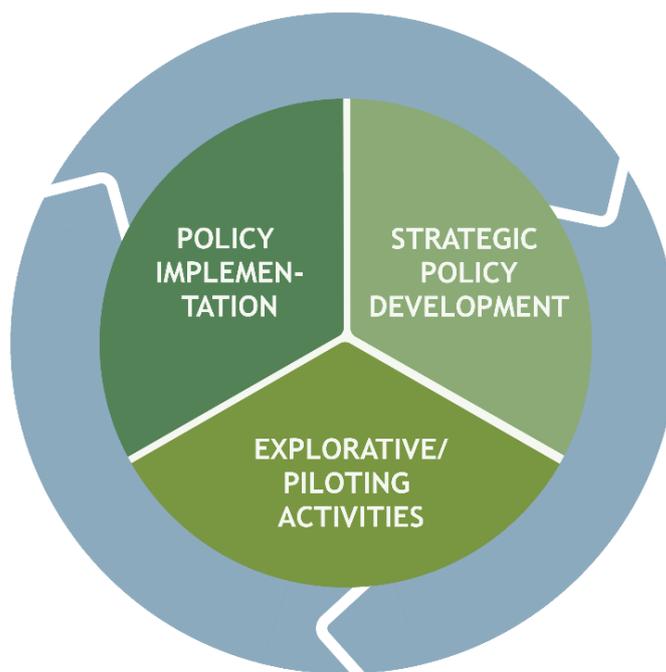
## Why does the programme need classic projects?

**The first call for project proposals is aimed at co-financing classic projects across all specific objectives under thematic priorities 1, 2 and 3.** There are no restrictions related to the topic subject to cooperation provided it fits in with the challenges and needs of the Alpine regions as described above.

Classic projects have been in place for several years already and offer a result oriented approach, helping to identify the expected contribution of projects in a defined policy field. Classic projects can tackle a wide range of challenges, and depending on the maturity of the topic subject to cooperation, they may address one or more phases of the policy cycle. The three phases are summarised below:

- **Strategic policy development** activities through the elaboration of common strategies or methodologies;
- **Explorative and piloting** activities to test models or tools and validate solutions that are applicable to different contexts;
- **Dissemination and capitalisation activities** to encourage **policy implementation** across sectors and regions.

Classic projects apply a result-oriented approach and deliver tangible results to the challenges identified above.



The budget earmarked for classic projects in the first call for proposals is a maximum of EUR 25 million ERDF.

## Which cornerstones require attention?

Applicants need to keep in mind the following cornerstones:

- The total financial size of each project shall range between EUR 1 and 3 million;
- Eligible expenses from EU Member States are co-financed and reimbursed up to 75%;
- The duration of classic projects shall range between 24 and 36 months;
- Classic projects shall involve 7 to 12 partners from at least four different countries of the programme area.

Project applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the reference values as outlined above. Deviations may be accepted in well-justified cases only.

## How to apply?

The project application follows a two-step procedure. In the first step, applicants need to submit a short



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version of the application form (AF step 1) via the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS). Promising proposals will be selected and invited to submit the full application form (AF step 2). Guidance on how to fill out the application form is available on the programme website. Furthermore, the following advises for the project development and application should be considered:

- Read our programme carefully, as all project proposals are required to identify the priority and specific objective they will be contributing to;
- Get in touch with the Alpine Space Contact Point (ACP) in your country for more information, general consultation on the project idea, partner search and advice on the consistency between your project idea and the priorities of the programme;
- Discover the results already delivered by the Alpine Space programme in the [output library](#). Another source of interest are the ARPAF projects whose results are accessible from the [EUSALP website](#) (see section of Action Groups);
- Read our [programme manual](#) as well as the FAQ section the programme website.

## How are projects selected?

All projects will be assessed by the Joint Secretariat (JS) with the support of the Alpine Space Contact Points against pre-defined selection criteria, as stated in the programme manual. The project assessment is done based on the information submitted at the time of application and the selection is made by the Programme Committee of the Alpine Space programme.

As part of the project development support, the Managing Authority/JS will provide online support to all potential applicants in developing high standard applications. Further training in relation to effective project implementation will be offered to successful applicants throughout the programming period, including Q&A sessions and online tutorials.

## What is the timeline?

The following timeline is valid in case up to 100 project proposals are received for assessment. In case more project proposals are received, the assessment period will be extended proportionally and published on the programme website soon after the submission deadline:



Step	Description	Indicative date or period	Calendar week
1	Publication of the call	19 November 2021	45
3	<b>Deadline for submitting (AF step 1)</b>	28 February 2022 at 3pm	8
4	Assessment	1 March - 13 April 2022	9-15
5	PC decision and invitation to submit full proposal <sup>1</sup>	2- 6 May 2022	18
6	Submission period for full proposal (AF step 2)	9 May - 24 June 2022	19-25
7	Assessment	27 June - 2 September 2022	26-35
8	PC decision	19 - 23 September 2022	38
9	Lead Partners' seminar	October	40-43

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<sup>1</sup> The deadline for submitting the AF in step 2 as well as the Partnership Agreement will be published in the programme website shortly after the approval of project proposals invited to submit the full application.