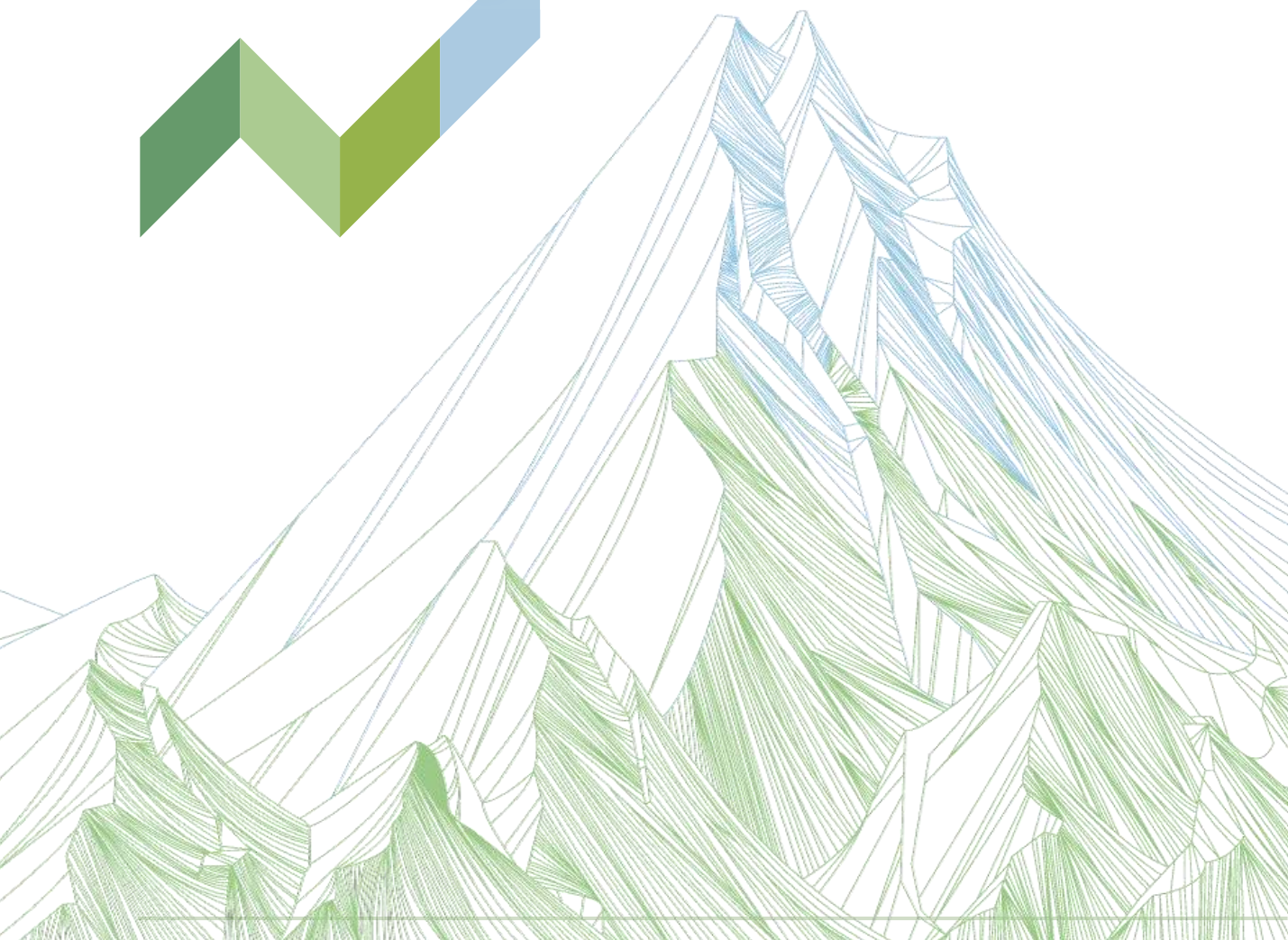# Terms of reference 2022
for small-scale project proposals

UPDATE: 19 October 2022 for the second cut-off date

21\27

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 globalization. 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, as in the previous periods and the new 'roll-out' and 'set the scene', the 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 'roll-out' and 'set the scene'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 'roll-out' and 'set the scene's projects only. For information on the expectations for classic projects, please consult the specific terms of reference.

Why does the programme need 'roll-out' and 'set the scene' (small-scale) projects?

'Roll-out' and 'set the scene' projects are a new form of cooperation, which draws on the expectations voiced by stakeholders in public consultations, but also experience gained in other funding programmes and initiatives. The purpose of this typology of projects is twofold: reach new target groups, allowing newcomers to experience a transnational cooperation project and to make greater use of synergies and complementarities with closed and ongoing classic projects. To better respond to the objectives of the new programme and to offer a new form of cooperation this new strand of shorter and smaller projects is offered.

'Roll-out' and 'set the scene' projects are shorter and involve less partners compared to classic projects. This typology allows the beneficiary to address innovative subjects from a thematic and/or territorial perspective and to deliver knowledge be it through analysis, experimentation or fieldwork. Applicants may submit proposals to **"set the scene"** on themes that are rather new to transnational cooperation. Another option is to test instruments, tools or policies, through exploratory activities. These and other examples could open up new perspectives to cooperation and the development of project proposals, which could be

submitted under the Alpine Space programme or other funding schemes.

Example: The 'Alps4GreenC' project will set the scene for the transnational utilization of biomass residues through investigation of biomass conversion opportunities in project partner countries and the proposal of transnational biochar-based value chains.

Along the programme objectives, the project is tackling the challenges of the Alpine area pertaining to adverse effects of energy dependency and high energy prices, biodiversity losses and high vulnerability to climate change, while offering solutions for the use of greatly available biomass in the region.

For 18 months, the 6 project partners from 3 countries will be dedicated to practical testing, pilot production of green carbon to evaluate the potential of its utilisation for steel and agriculture industry and will actively promote policy recommendations to public stakeholders.

This way, the project will contribute towards creating the conditions for energy sufficiency and climate-protection of Alpine space showcasing the innovation and resource potentials already present, but currently disconnected.

'Roll-out' projects make use of ready-made tools and solutions (mainly from previous projects from all available programmes) to boost their implementation and use in the territories. Such measures aim at widely promoting the up-take of project achievements among target groups for greater impact and added value both at local and regional level. These actions predominantly focus on mature fields of cooperation where a body of knowledge is already available and tested by stakeholders. Such follow and spin-off activities are also opportunities to explore complementarities with other projects and initiatives.

Example: A consortium of 6 PP from 6 regions in 5 countries develop a project in the field of renewable energy source (RES) and energy communities. They plan to make use of the outcome of the Interreg AS project "ALPGRIDS" (call 4). They will use the final and ready made project results like a 'microgrid policy package' and a 'microgrid replication guide'. Each PP will involve all energy agencies, 15 communities, engaged citizens and stakeholder networks in each participating region (or sometimes country) to promote and increase the uptake of RES in the Alps through microgrid solutions. The expected result would be measurable, visible and would make a considerable change in the programme area, effective as soon as possible.

The programme is eager to reach as many target groups as possible with roll-out projects to ensure the widest possible up-take. Therefore applicants are advised to cover larger parts of the programme area with their activities. A first step for project partners could be to act even stronger as multipliers, work across regions by opening invitations to events/activities offered by the project to neighbouring regions that are

not part of the partnership. Not only the number of project partners is relevant but also the number and kind of activities, the communication activities, the involvement of target groups, observers etc.

> Example: A PP from the Autonomous Province of Bolzano extends invitations to project events not only within the own region but also involves target groups in the neighboring provinces of Trento and Tyrol which are not part of the project area. Regional actors often have well established networks in other regions due to previous or ongoing mutual project work (also in cross-border Interreg projects, for example). This would not unduly increase the PPs effort and costs but could make a much greater impact for the project.

Relevant project partners for **roll-out projects** are all institutions like business support organisations or regional economic development agencies that are dedicated to the daily, direct cooperation with the final target groups of SMEs, public institutions, authorities, etc. R&D institutions and universities are not primarily addressed for this strand. Their participation would have to be justified in the application.

As the programme aims to encourage new experimentation, 'roll-out' and 'set the scene' projects will be also a laboratory for new ideas, which draws on experience from a variety of disciplines. Regardless of the approach to cooperation, projects need to demonstrate tangible and realistic outputs.

For further details about 'roll-out' and 'set the scene' projects, please refer to section A.3 of the programme manual.

The budget earmarked for 'roll-out' and 'set the scene' projects for priorities 1 to 3 in the period 2021-2027 is of approximately EUR 20 million ERDF. For the year 2022, the programme will commit approximately EUR 5 million ERDF, which represents one fourth of the overall budget.

Special focus on "roll-out" projects for the 2nd cut-off date

While both types of small-scale projects can be submitted, for the second cut-off date, 'roll-out' projects are particularly welcome.

Europe and the Alpine Space are facing difficult times and issues such as the energy crisis or resource scarcity are looming. Many Interreg projects have dealt with exactly these issues in the past period and offer solutions and tools that can help face the crisis. These tools should be used and widely implemented in the Alpine Space, while they are up to date. The programme output Library is available and contains a set of useful tools developed by experts in response to burning issues. Other programmes also offer a rich pool of ready-made tools. With this cut-off date, the programme wants to help roll-out this knowledge and support a wide uptake in the Alpine Region.

This decision round is open to all specific objectives of priorities 1-3 of the programme. Applicants are encouraged to address especially challenges of the climate and energy crisis.

Which cornerstones require attention?

Applicants needs to keep in mind the following cornerstones:

- The total financial size of each project shall range between EUR 250.000 and 750.000;
- Eligible expenses from EU Members States are co-financed and reimbursed up to 75%;
- The duration of small-scale projects shall range between 12 and 18 months;
- Small-scale projects shall involve 3 to 6 partners from at least three different countries of the programme area.
- Please note that the principle of economy and efficiency must be observed both for 'roll-out' and 'set the scene' projects. Activities and budget should correlate and the benchmark of classic projects should be applied. The indicative budget per partner for small-scale projects with smaller consortia should be around EUR 80.000 (ERDF) for a project duration of 18 months. **Deviations from this recommendation are possible, but have to be explained.**
- It is highly recommended for small-scale projects to create a compact and streamlined work plan that is not too complex, easy to understand for all PP and does include no more than four activities.

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 application procedure is simple and quick to manage as it follows a **one-step procedure**.

Applicants need to submit the application form via the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (JEMS). Guidance on how to fill out the application form is available on the programme website. Furthermore, the following advises for 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 on the programme website.

How are projects selected?

All projects will be assessed by the Joint Secretariat 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 for the second-cut-off date?

'Roll-out' projects can be submitted starting from 24. October 2022. The second cut-off date is 16 December 2022. The following timeline is valid for the second cut-off date in case the number of eligible proposals for assessment is equal or less than 30. If 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	24 October	43
3	**Cut-off date for submitting proposals**	16December 2022 at 1pm	50
4	Assessment	09 January – 17 February 2023	2-7
5	PC decision for the approval of projects	06– 10 March2023	10
6	Start date for all approved projects	01April 2023	13
7	Get started seminar	April	14-17