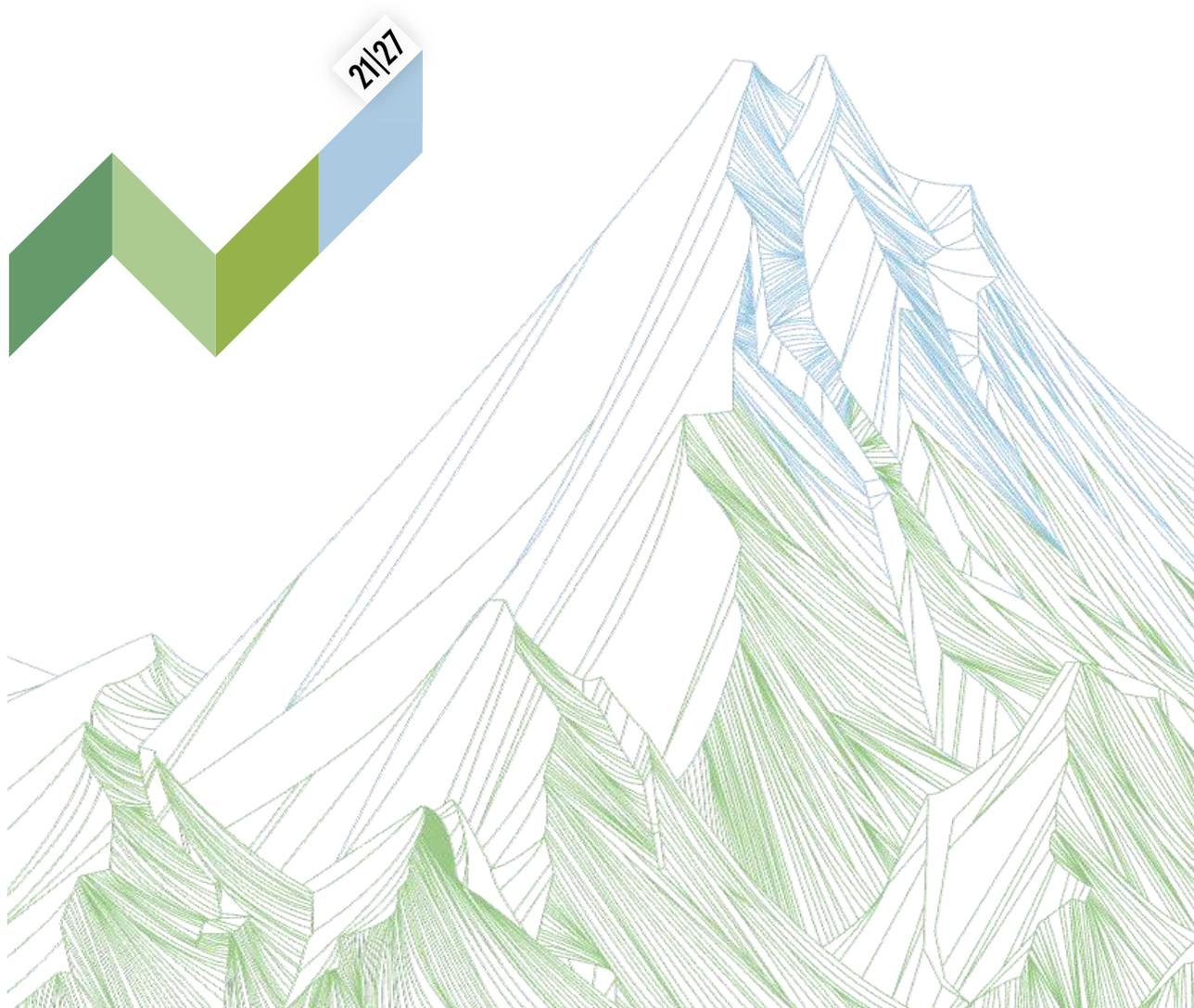


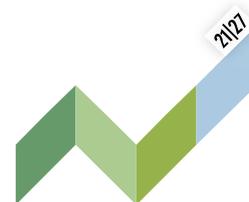
# Terms of Reference

## Call for small-scale governance projects

Approved by the Programme Committee on 24 January 2024

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# Interreg Alpine Space programme 2021-2027

The Interreg Alpine Space programme is an EU transnational cooperation programme, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with **EUR 107 million ERDF** for the 2021-2027 period. The programme co-finances transnational cooperation projects in the seven Alpine countries.

The programme cooperation area is aligned with that of the [EU strategy for the Alpine Region \(EUSALP\)](#). This is a strategic effort to **strengthen the coherence and complementarity between both initiatives**. Our programme is also anchored on several EU policy initiatives, including the European Green Deal and the [Territorial Agenda 2030](#).

Europe is challenged by several ongoing mega-trends to which the Alpine region is not immune (globalisation, **climate change** and **digitalisation** among others). Their acceleration impacts the environment, economies and societies, which calls for adequate and innovative transnational responses. The Alpine region has a finite amount of natural resources, which calls for **place-based approaches** to enable and support the **energy transition**. Also the potential of **circular economy** is key and needs to be further exploited. To tackle these challenges efficiently the programme acts as a driver for stakeholders who are willing to implement on the ground fresh ideas and new approaches.

We are at the forefront of the transition to a just, carbon neutral and climate-resilient Alpine region. With the programme, we want to **foster the integration of sustainable economic development, societal well-being and the preservation of biodiversity**. To do so, we want to bring together stakeholders from different sectors, levels and regions to cooperate on innovative projects and pioneering ideas for the benefit of those who live and work in the Alpine region, according to the programme [priorities](#).

For a detailed description of contents of each priority and specific objectives, including information on the main challenges, type of actions and embedding in the relevant EU strategies, please refer to the [programme document](#).

## Our call for governance projects

The Alpine region has a long-standing tradition of cooperation at different levels and in different formats. Discussions and exchanges among Alpine organisations underline the need for greater coordination between different stakeholders and the alignment of resources and strategies to address challenges that know no borders. There is much unexplored potential for improving governance.

**This call for project proposals is aimed at co-financing small-scale projects under the priority 4 “cooperatively managed and developed Alpine region”.**

The indicative budget earmarked is EUR 4,7 million ERDF, depending on the quality of assessed received applications.



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, strengthening the resilience of the Alpine region to the outlined challenges and dynamics.

Projects shall apply a result-oriented approach and deliver tangible results to the challenges identified in the [programme](#), embedded in a broader strategic context, such as EUSALP, Territorial Agenda 2030 or other EU or pan-Alpine policies. All projects are expected to contribute with solutions to reach the objective of the programme, deepening and evolving cooperation and governance structures in the Alpine region through the involvement of the civil society. Particular attention should be given to measures aimed to support and improve local governance in times of crisis and transformation, share good practices and implement strategies originating from the needs of the territory.

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 are addressed to defined target groups.

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. The partnership composition is crucial to leverage respective knowledge and ensure the uptake of results. When choosing your partners, consider that the topics can be tackled from different angles and solutions developed should be also practically anchored.

## Our expectations

Improving coordination between stakeholders is central, among not only different public administrations and agencies in charge of government at different levels and across sectors.

In order to make a meaningful contribution to the priority, the programme invites then applicants to develop project ideas dedicated to:

- (1) Improve coordination between organisations at all levels of government and governance, as well as different policy sectors to **reinforce multi-level governance and cross-sectoral cooperation**;
- (2) Develop and implement place-specific action responding to territorial needs to **foster integrated place-based approaches**;
- (3) Involve relevant stakeholders and citizens throughout the policy cycle to adopt **bottom-up and participatory approaches**, engaging with communities and ensuring sustainability and local ownership of results through co-creation processes;
- (4) Strengthen the skills, abilities and processes of stakeholders to **develop capacities**.



The ideal project partnership should be **coherent** and **reflect** these concepts (e.g. represent different sectors and different levels of governance; ensure an active role of municipalities and local authorities; involve relevant stakeholders; consider emerging methods coming from civil society movements etc.). The partnership should also possess sufficient **capacities to implement** these approaches (e.g. partners skilled in civil society and civic engagement, in capacity building activities etc.).

Given the specificities of mountain territories, it is advisable to identify project intervention areas that are linked by geographical and sectoral interactions and interdependencies (e.g. education, health, employment, leisure activities), going beyond mere administrative boundaries. For transnational cooperation with not necessarily adjacent cooperation areas, functionalities can be found especially from joint characteristics, joint challenges and development potentials.

Projects can be related, in terms of general topics, to the other three priorities of the programme, as well as contribute to the [cross-cutting priorities](#) identified by the EUSALP Action Groups (i.e. promoting digitalisation for the Alps; accelerating the energy transition for a carbon-neutral Alpine Region; promoting a joint water management transition; boosting circular economy).

As Priority 4 focuses on governance and differs from the other priorities of the programme in that it does not have a single thematic focus, project proposals on this small-scale call do not need to have a 'roll-out' or 'setting-the-scene' approach. For further information about small-scale projects please refer to section A.3 of the [programme manual](#).

A non-exhaustive list of indicative governance related actions is provided below:

#### **Building connections:**

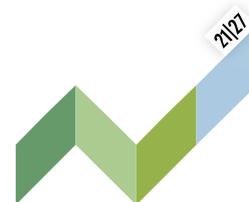
- Set-up or consolidate transnational networks and systems for effective governance;
- Build cross-sectoral communities in different policy areas, to explore alpine-specific strengths.

#### **Fostering innovative solutions:**

- Run joint innovative pilot projects to design, create, test, scale-up solutions to support governance in key policy areas;
- Develop and implement solutions to enhance cooperation and organisation processes within the EUSALP governance structure and other transnational structures, such as the Alpine Convention;
- Develop solutions and pilot projects for effective communication and tools to support multi-level governance;
- Capitalise, replicate or transfer innovative solutions from territories to increase their use and create impact.

#### **Empowering communities:**

- Support capacity building and trainings for public authorities and stakeholders in different policy



- areas and governance levels;
- Implement measures to strengthen local governance in times of crisis and transformation, share good practices.

**Involving communities:**

- Engage civil society, youth, and vulnerable groups in governance processes;
- Exploit digital collaboration tools for inclusive decision-making;
- Design tailor-made strategies and solutions to integrate and communicate with stakeholders across policy and governance-levels, as well as with civil society;
- Develop learning tools with innovative approaches for transnational cooperation.

Moreover please bear in mind that this call is not suitable for:

- Projects with a focus on classic communication of specific topics towards political decision makers (limited to awareness raising);
- Projects to establish new Alpine cooperation structures or bodies, as it will be a challenge to find further funding opportunities after project end;
- Projects with an academic and research-oriented focus;
- Projects with a main focus on infrastructure or the technical development of IT tools and products.

## Which cornerstones require attention?

Applicants need to keep in mind the following cornerstones:

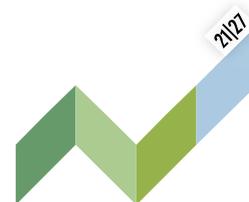
- **Partners:** The lead partner shall be a public or public equivalent institution. A good mix of project partners including implementation-oriented organisations, in particular from the local and regional levels, as well as multipliers, is expected. All information can be found in the [programme manual](#) (chapter B.2.1 Project Partners).
- **Transnationality:** The partnership must involve 4 to 7 partners from at least three different countries of the programme area (including the lead partner).
- **Co-funding:** Eligible expenses from EU Members States are co-financed and reimbursed up to 75%.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, project applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the reference values as outlined below:

- **Total budget per project:** Between EUR 250.000 and 750.000. The whole range shall be used.

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<sup>1</sup> All project partners from Switzerland and Liechtenstein are asked to contact the Alpine Space Contact Points (ACP) for more information on the co-funding.



Projects with budgets close to the lower range are welcome.

- **Duration:** Between 12 and 24 months.
- **Work packages:** It is highly recommended for small-scale projects to create a compact and streamlined work plan, to focus on up to 2 work packages (WP) only, including no more than four activities per WP, to limit the number of deliverables to the absolute necessary and to focus on the success of outputs/results.
- **Budget per partner:** reasonable and in line with the concept of small-scale projects, which is calling for operations with smaller budget than classic project, also at partner level.

Deviations may be accepted in well-justified cases.

## How to apply?

The project application follows a **one-step procedure**. Applicants must submit the application form and the signed partnership agreement via the [Joint Electronic Monitoring System](#) (Jems). Guidance on how to fill out the application form is provided in the [programme manual](#) (Annex Ib).

For more information, visit our [“How to apply” webpage](#).

## How are projects selected and supported?

The Joint Secretariat (JS) will assess all the project proposals submitted on time with the support of the ACP according to pre-defined selection criteria (see [programme manual](#), Annex IIb). The Programme Committee of the Alpine Space programme will make the final selection by consensus.

Use the service provided by the [Alpine Space Contact Points](#). They serve as a first interlocutor for project applicants and partners in the respective country. They assist you in project development and application and can be contacted for any other information in your language.

As part of the project development support, the Managing Authority and JS will provide online support to all potential applicants in developing high standard applications. For all approved project, lead partners will be invited to a ‘Get started! Seminar’. Further trainings in relation to effective project implementation will be offered to successful applicants throughout the programming period, including Q&A sessions and online tutorials.

Before applying, we invite you also to consider the **following advices**:

- Visit our [“How to apply” webpage](#) (resources section), where all the relevant documents and information are gathered.
- Read our [programme](#) document carefully.



- Read our [programme manual](#) as well as the [FAQ section](#) on the programme website.
- Get a first contact with the [Alpine Space Contact Point \(ACP\)](#) in your country for more information well ahead of the submission deadline. They will provide general consultation on the project idea, partner search and advice on the consistency between your project idea and the priorities of the programme.
- Take up the offer of a joint consultation with ACP and JS to discuss your project idea and learn more about the application process.
- Discover the results already delivered by the Alpine Space programme in the [output library](#). Another source of interest are the ARPAF projects, implemented as part of the EUSALP (see section of Action Groups) whose results are accessible from the [EUSALP website](#).
- Before submitting your application form, use our checklist for small-scale project (“How to apply” webpage, Application kit section) to ensure you meet the eligibility criteria.
- For your communication plan: through which channels do you want to reach and involve your target groups and the policy representatives? How do you want to disseminate the outputs and communicate the results?
- Make sure to demonstrate in depth your proposal’s significant contribution to wider strategies and policies (EUSALP, EU Green Deal, Territorial Agenda 2030, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, etc.) in the application form.

## What is the timeline?

Step	Description	Indicative date or period	Calendar week
1	Idea Lab for governance projects	9-10 April 2024	15
2	Opening of project submission on JEMS	20 May 2024	21
3	<b>Deadline for submitting applications</b>	27 June 2024 at 13:00	26
4	<b>Programme committee decision</b>	Mid-October 2024. Exact date will be fixed once number of applications is known.	41/42
5	Lead Partners‘ Get started! Seminar	End of October - November 2024	