

PROPOSAL

EU PROJECT DEVELOPMENT MANUAL



Score Maximization Strategy
Tailored for Candidate Countries
100% CO₂ Offsetting Model

Full-Scope Sample Proposal
Aligned with PRAG 2025
Integrated PM² Methodology

Dr. Cemal BAŞ
EU Project Expert

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“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.”

Schuman Declaration of May 9, 1950, which laid the foundation for the European Union.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Cemal BAŞ is an economist specialising in urban economy and local governance. With over 15 years of experience, he has held diverse roles in numerous institutions at both national and international levels, working on the preparation, implementation and monitoring of European Union projects.

Dr. BAŞ began his professional career in Australia as a financial researcher at the University of New South Wales and the Securities Industry Research Centre of Asia-Pacific (SIRCA). In 2011, he continued his career as an economist at the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT).

Between 2018 and 2023, he served as the founding manager of the Project and Financing Unit at the UMT, where he led the development of a portfolio of over €220 million in EU funds for local governments across Türkiye. In this role, he led staff training, managed the project portfolio, negotiated with donors, and oversaw the institutionalisation of the Project and Financing Unit to ensure sustainable and professional operations. He also served as a board member of UMT Personnel Inc. during the same period.

BAŞ has played an active role in the international representation of local and regional governments. Within the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, he held positions as spokesperson and rapporteur. He advocated for Congress policies on the environment and climate change and served as a rapporteur in the monitoring process of local democracy in Montenegro. He has also held political, advisory and representative roles in international networks such as the European Committee of the Regions, United Cities and Local Governments, and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

Having studied finance in Australia (La Trobe University), BAŞ continued his academic journey in Türkiye, completing a master's degree in local administrations at Sakarya University and a PhD at Ankara University, focusing on the impacts of mega-projects on urban and spatial economics.

Cemal BAŞ has authored guides, project manuals, and training materials aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of local governments. Combining practical knowledge with academic discipline, he continues to produce practical resources for field professionals.

PREAMBLE

In March 2011, during my first days at the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT), I was assigned to participate in a training program called the Leadership Academy. The training was to be delivered by a senior British expert from the Council of Europe. I was filled with excitement at the prospect of working in a multinational environment where I could interact with people from diverse backgrounds. At the beginning of the training, a general presentation introduced the main project and its activities. It appeared to be quite an interesting and enjoyable process. This was particularly striking for me, as my project experience in Australia had been limited to financial data and Excel spreadsheets.

In my early years at the UMT, I took on supporting roles in various projects implemented through mechanisms such as the European Union, the United Nations, the Swedish Development Agency, and Dutch development funds. With each passing day, I gained a deeper understanding of the project environment and found great enjoyment in the work. Owing to project activities, I travelled to provinces in Türkiye that I had never been to before, met different people every day, and participated in occasional international visits. Every week I worked under a different job description, operating completely outside the bounds of standard, written job descriptions.

Almost all the projects were typically prepared by our counterparts abroad or by strong institutions within Türkiye, and UMT was involved as a project partner. At the time, I must say, we were only involved in the easy and enjoyable parts of the work. However, the thought, “What if we prepared our own projects?” constantly stayed on our minds. Although we were not actively involved in the process of accessing finance at that stage, during the project design phase, we did work in close contact with our Swedish and Dutch counterparts (specifically the experts from the municipal associations of both countries).

Admittedly, during this period, I learned a great deal from my Swedish and Dutch colleagues on fundamental issues such as time management, meeting etiquette, and principles of communication in multicultural settings. For example, when our Swedish project manager said the meeting starts at 8:00, he meant it literally – at 8:00 on the dot. Small talk, whether about the night before or just to break the ice, was only allowed between 7:30 and 8:00. Even break time was to be used for something worthwhile, like doing handstand push-ups against a wall. That’s why I probably laughed harder than anyone when the Svens Architecture team, while hanging out with Barney Stinson on a rooftop, suddenly started doing push-ups just to make use of otherwise wasted time (Season 4, How I Met Your Mother).

In order to be more involved in project activities and learn the process, I did my best to support the senior experts in my department. They, in turn, tried to include me in technical discussions as much as possible. I would take note of all the terms I heard in meetings that I didn’t understand, then later that evening at the office, I would try to find out their meanings. If I couldn’t figure them out through online sources, I would ask the senior experts the next day. This method helped me tremendously in quickly learning the technical jargon.

I believe it was toward the end of 2011 when my senior colleague, whom I was reporting to at the time, and I received an invitation to a meeting from a funding institution. During the meeting, they told us that there was an available fund and that the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT) would be a suitable institution to develop a project proposal for it. They asked us to submit a complete

European Union project proposal with all necessary documents, and the budget was even larger than that of the projects we had previously been involved in as partners.

However, this time, we would be the ones in the driver's seat, and the financing would come through IPA funds. We had never written or managed an IPA project before. Still, since it was not really an option to tell the decision-makers of our institution that we were turning down such an offer, we accepted it – albeit with hesitation. We contracted two independent experts who had experience in the relevant project field and received support from them in preparing the proposal and the budget. Advancing step by step with questions, in a process we knew absolutely nothing about, was incredibly exhausting and demanding.

One day, in a moment of exhaustion and frustration, we went to our secretary general and suggested that, since our institution did not have significant budget constraints, this work could also be carried out using our own funds. In response, he said, “Then how will we learn to do difficult things?” and sent us back to the office. But at the same time, he ensured we had full financial and administrative support to receive additional expert assistance. He was absolutely right: things are only difficult because we don't yet know how to do them.

The project's procurement process was an entirely different story and learning experience. Reading through thousands of pages of tender documents, and doing so for months in a room where no phone or electronic device was allowed, was incredibly tedious. Yet, observing how the contractors interpreted the project we had written as a team, and seeing how a simple sentence describing an activity could take shape so differently in the minds of contractors, was just as fascinating.

At the end of the process, one company won the tender, and the technical assistance team began working on the project. As it was planned, they set up their office in our building. The team leader was a senior expert who had previously served as a minister in Portugal. The team also included an employment expert from San Marino who had worked in many countries around the world, a highly successful Turkish training expert with extensive project experience, and a visibility expert who had worked in various cities across Türkiye. Including young professionals and support staff, a team of about ten people started working on the same floor as us.

Every morning, we gathered to discuss the agenda. As the primary person responsible for the project, the entire team reported to me. There I was, in my twenties, listening each week to the work plan, presented by someone who had served as a minister of labour. I was gradually beginning to understand the power of technical assistance in European Union projects.

I closely followed all the experts, especially the Portuguese team leader, and made an effort to learn something from each of them. Moreover, the senior management of our institution occasionally invited the technical assistance team, hosted them with kindness, exchanged ideas, and treated them with great respect. Even though I was responsible for the team, I also showed the utmost respect to these experienced professionals and asked detailed questions about anything I did not understand.

One day, the team leader had to negotiate with a subcontractor firm as part of the project activity. Watching this individual in action, who had negotiated with labour unions for years as Portugal's minister of labour, was nothing short of a “negotiation masterclass”. The expert from San Marino, being the most experienced member of the team, could foresee the possible consequences of every

step taken and would immediately outline the riskiest areas. It was from this woman that I learned the flash-forward technique is not a learnable method but something that comes solely with experience.

Later on in the process, we also became part of a twinning grant program developed by Türkiye's Ministry of European Union Affairs. This program included a grant component and would, for the first time, provide our institution with direct experience in managing EU grants. The first phase of the program would be managed by the Ministry of European Union Affairs while the second phase, if funded, would be led by UMT. However, to gain grant management experience even during the first phase, UMT was involved as a co-beneficiary in all grant processes.

During this time, I engaged in close cooperation with experts from the Ministry of European Union Affairs and the Central Finance and Contracts Unit. We read and evaluated all 350 or so applications submitted. To be honest, the foundation of this book (*the Manual*) lies in the experience that I gained during that grant evaluation process. Once you understand where a grant application loses points and gets eliminated, you naturally begin to develop your own internal defence mechanisms for proposals.

Between 2011 and 2018, I took part in numerous projects and acquired considerable experience in project management. However, in March 2018, when the European Commission approved the second package of the Facilities for Refugees in Türkiye (FRIT-II), there was a notable revival in the EU grant sector within the country. As a result, institutions began holding meetings and everyone was trying to establish partnerships, particularly with UN sub-offices in Türkiye, the World Bank, and similar development institutions. Meanwhile, UMT was also frequently visited and often offered partnerships.

However, one of the recurring questions we were asked by visiting agencies was whether UMT had structured and institutionalised project management experience. Up until that point, projects at our institution were handled by interested individuals; there was no dedicated unit responsible solely for project management.

In July 2018, we were once again in such a meeting, and our then-president (the political leader of the Union) was also present. After the meeting, she gave the instruction to establish a unit and create institutional project development and management capacity. At that moment, our Secretary General pointed to me and suggested to the President that I should lead the new unit. Since the President already knew my work closely, she agreed. And just like that, I walked out of that meeting as the head of a newly forming department.

The initial excitement of "I've become a manager!" quickly gave way to stress when the Secretary General called me into his office. He said, "I did my turn, now it's yours. Don't let me down!" I had worked under stress before, with tight deadlines, targets, and deliverables. But none of those had caused the kind of pressure that this sentence did. Because now there was no predefined target. There was a mission at hand, and filling it with the appropriate deliverables was entirely my responsibility. After all, each of the senior colleagues I had worked with had already left the Union, and I was the only one with an overall understanding of the EU project sector.

To start off, I brought in two colleagues I knew well who were both younger than me. We moved into an unused office space within the Union and got to work. Our first task was to make everyone aware that such a unit now existed. We could write our own projects, of course, but if we also joined projects developed by others, we could multiply the outputs.

During the first week of work, we created a five-year roadmap and, one month later, presented it to a commission composed of senior executives from all the metropolitan municipalities in Türkiye. The targets were as follows: to institutionalise in the first year; to build a project portfolio within two years; to enter the grant management process by the third year; to become the main institutional structure in the field of grants and financing for municipalities by the fourth year; and finally, by the fifth year (2023, the centenary of the Republic) to become an institution capable of signing a direct grant agreement with the European Union.

With this policy in place, we began visiting all the contracting authorities in Ankara, one by one. In the initial stages, I received a great deal of help and support from my colleagues within the Ministry of European Union Affairs and the Central Finance and Contracts Unit. They were genuinely pleased about my appointment and provided me with all the support they could, with great effort and dedication.

Right after visiting the contracting authorities in ministries, we moved on to visit financial institutions in Istanbul. This was because our unit's main objective was to develop access points for municipalities to grants, funds, and credit opportunities. EU funds were our top priority, but they were not the only instrument.

Consequently, we invited the representatives of UN agencies in Türkiye (such as UNDP, UN Women, UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, and UNICEF) to a high-level breakfast meeting. Some of these institutions had previously approached us with project proposals and were pillar-assessed entities capable of accessing EU funds directly. The opening speech was delivered by the Secretary General, and I followed with a presentation of our unit's five-year plan. I believe we spent around €2,000 on that breakfast. Some colleagues at the Union later criticised me, claiming that such events held during the promotion phase showed a lack of care in spending public funds. However, there is a Turkish saying: *"You don't withhold a chicken from where the goose will come,"* meaning one should not hold back small investments where big gains are expected. True to this saying, following that meeting, we made return visits to all the UN agencies and prepared a total of three different project proposals worth millions of Euros, submitting an application package to the EU.

The aggressive strategy we implemented during the first year began to bear fruit, and many of the proposals were gradually moving toward financing agreements. By then, the workload had exceeded the capacity of a three-person team. I held regular meetings with the President of the Union and provided her with progress reports. In one such meeting, where I raised the issue of insufficient staffing, she asked, "How many staff members do you need?" I replied that giving her a number at that moment would merely be a wish; instead, I would request two additional staff members for project management each time a new contract was signed. That way, it would no longer be a wish, but a concrete demand. Since she was an engineer, she found this approach to be quite fact-based and clear, and guaranteed the allocation of two personnel for each signed contract.

The Unit, initially established with just three staff members and once the smallest within the Union, grew to be a team of 20 through the signed contracts over the years, eventually becoming the Union's largest unit. The team had an incredibly strong energy; everyone shared the same enthusiasm, and each team member genuinely believed they were doing important work. Although official working hours began at 9:00 a.m., every morning between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. there were always at least 2 to 3 people already at the office with me, working on new ideas. And at 6:00 p.m., when the workday officially ended, I would still see everyone working in the office.

Despite having enthusiastically decorated my office in the first weeks of my appointment, I was now rarely in it unless I had a guest. My first act every morning was to walk straight into the meeting room and sit at the head of the table. Each team member would bring their laptop and sit around the table; one person would assist me with daily tasks and email responses via the projector, while others continued working on their laptops. Everyone would ask questions about things they were unsure of. Even though each person had their own desk and chair, nearly all of us would spend every day working together in that small meeting room. In doing so, we created an environment in which no knowledge or experience remained exclusive to any one person. Everyone learned everything, and development was rapid. In fact, when team members didn't have any specific tasks that day and found themselves alone in the department office, they would get bored and end up spending the entire day following what was happening in the meeting room.

While we were training each other internally, we were also thinking about how to train municipalities. We were receiving training requests from all over the country. However, I held the opinion that trainings delivered by the private sector in the field were not particularly useful when it came to writing EU projects. For that reason, I decided to conduct an experiment. First, using the capacity-building budgets allocated from projects, I purchased project-writing training from two different organisations and sent my team members to participate.

After the first training, I randomly opened a page from a concept note and asked them what they could say about the writing of that section. They couldn't provide much insight. During the second training, delivered by another company, I visited the training room. When I walked in, I saw them all holding a rope. The trainer was apparently trying to illustrate the strength that comes from stakeholder unity. At the end of this training as well, I opened different sections of the full application form and asked my colleagues some questions, but they said they had never seen the document in either training.

Gathering the entire team, we developed a training model in which a municipal staff member with no prior knowledge would, within two days, feel confident enough to say "I can fill out these forms," and have overall understanding of the documents. Frankly, the overall structure of this *Manual* reflects the training model we developed back in these days.

As the projects began to be implemented one by one, an intense field program followed. Together with the team members, we were constantly travelling to different provinces across Türkiye. Whenever possible, we preferred to make these trips by car, which allowed us to visit municipalities and mayors along the route, inform them about our unit, and listen to their needs. I was always the one driving during these trips. Team members, one by one, would sit in the front seat with their laptops (until they felt carsick) and go over daily tasks with me as we drove. On the other hand, travelling by car also meant that the experts would immediately start mapping out the best restaurants and famous dishes along the route, adding a positive dimension to the journey. Despite the intensity and exhaustion, making new acquaintances, meeting new communities, and discovering new places on each trip were genuinely enjoyable.

In response to the team's high level of motivation, I did my best to support them by incorporating capacity-building components into the joint projects we conducted with partner institutions. I allocated budgets for the team to obtain necessary certifications and created time for the trainings they requested. In particular, to enhance their command over PRAG documents, I invited colleagues from the Ministry of European Union Affairs and the Central Finance and Contracts Unit. Senior experts from these institutions sincerely enjoyed sharing their knowledge with a young and enthusiastic team,

and after the sessions, they would sit down with me to discuss areas where the team still needed improvement. I should note that in the capacity development phase, we were implementing a joint project with a German organisation. The German team leader heading the project, our close friend, had allocated a substantial budget specifically for our team's training and provided us with significant financial support in strengthening our capacities.

In addition to this positive atmosphere, we also had the strong backing of the Union's political and administrative leadership. When this was combined with the support of other public institutions and the momentum created by positive bilateral relationships, we quickly reached a project portfolio exceeding €50 million. At that point, the annual revenue generated by the Project and Financing Unit surpassed the Union's overall annual revenue; and in the following years, it began producing income equivalent to twice the Union's yearly budget.

Of course, the fact that the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye is a national-level institution with administrative and financial autonomy was a major factor in the growth of our budgets. Under the name of UMT, instead of negotiating small-scale projects, we were able to directly engage in high-budget program negotiations with contracting authorities and the EU Delegation. Additionally, at the beginning of each IPA programming period, the commonly required policy relevance component was significantly supported by UMT's memberships and roles at European and global levels, which directly fed into our unit and allowed us to write highly strong policy relevance sections.

The President of the Union, drawing on her political experience, would frequently invite us to her office and advise, "Create a positive agenda; we don't do negativity." We embraced this principle and applied it in our work. For instance, if one of our proposals with a partner institution was rejected, we would maintain our relationships on a positive note by writing responses such as, "We've learned a great deal from this application. Looking forward to developing a stronger and higher-budget project in the future."

During this time, the secretary general who had originally established the Unit had moved on, and a new secretary general had been appointed. He too showed strong support. When mayors approached him for financial assistance, he would invite our team members into his office and say things like, "These youngsters are the real experts on this topic in Türkiye. We have the best team in the country. Sit down with them. They know this far better than I do," thus constantly honouring and elevating the team in the eyes of others.

Throughout this process, we submitted many applications. We failed in many of them. But we learned that to secure one success, you have to show the effort of at least ten. No one hands out budgets randomly. No budget falls into your desk by chance. These are only made possible through persistent, relentless applications carried out in the spirit of teamwork. As the famous actor Denzel Washington once said, "Without commitment, you'll never start. But more importantly, without consistency, you'll never finish."

By the time we reached 2023, I had begun to feel the pressure more severely. The only remaining item from the presentation I had made five years earlier to the commission of senior executives from metropolitan municipalities – the one objective we had not yet achieved – was the signing of a direct grant agreement with the European Commission in 2023. We had fulfilled every other promise. For this final goal, the masterpiece of our five-year action plan, an appropriate funding opportunity had emerged.

This time, however, we were negotiating not with the EU Delegation in Türkiye, but directly with the European Commission itself. In response to their demands, we were developing entirely new financial

management models that had never been implemented before. The Union of Municipalities of Türkiye was no longer a recipient organisation in the EU project sector; it had transformed into a competitive, self-confident institution, contending for funding windows alongside the very organisations it had once received support from. Once, during the launch of a large financing programme, we even developed and presented a programme-specific financial model to the decision-makers at the European Commission and requested €100 million. A representative from the EU Delegation in Türkiye described our attempt in a meeting by saying “We’re warning the region that a meteor is approaching” (referring to the €1 billion fast-paced financing line), “and UMT is asking whether they can surf on it.”

Eventually, I was unsuccessful in securing the direct grant agreement. Yet, we learned a lot, developed new models, and made a significant impression in the sector. The massive project proposal we submitted was approved and launched as the highest-budgeted project in UMT’s history; however, its implementation was structured jointly with an intermediary pillar-assessed organisation.

To me, this felt like a signal. I had now experienced nearly every thrilling and uncertain step imaginable, and I found myself operating within an increasingly repetitive framework. The Unit’s project portfolio had surpassed €220 million, and we could no longer find the time for new ideas, being fully consumed by managing the existing workload. Moreover, even the programme scheduled for launch in 2027 had already been set, and I could nearly foresee the scope of my work all the way through to 2030. On top of all that, we were still monitoring our pending applications within a portfolio worth more than €100 million.

Meanwhile, I was simultaneously holding 13 different political roles at both national and international levels. Due to the frequent travel required by those responsibilities, I began to fall behind on the Unit’s administrative matters. Given the size of the existing portfolio, failure was becoming inevitable.

In August 2023 – exactly five years after we founded the Unit (August 2018) – I handed over my position to another colleague.

After stepping down, I focused on my much-delayed doctoral dissertation. Shortly after submitting the first draft of the thesis, I opened a Word document, typed “Proposal” at the top, and began writing this *Manual* that had long been on my mind.

To be honest, I had completed the *Manual* by the end of 2024. At the beginning of 2025, just before sending it to print, I was doing the final proofreading and cross-checking the references I had cited. Then I suddenly noticed, there had been a revision to the PRAG documents. As a result, the template I had developed had already become outdated.

Anyone who has written a book knows very well that revising a manuscript after calling it “finished” is an incredibly frustrating process. Almost all of the initial excitement vanishes. Revisions that could be made in a day begin to stretch across weeks. I went through a similar process myself. However, the calls and messages I received from many friends who knew I was writing a book, reignited my motivation. The idea that the final version of the *Manual*, incorporating the PRAG 2025 revision in full detail, would become the most up-to-date guide in the field, began to grow on me.

I must point out that many of the ideas we introduced in the training model developed within our team were addressed in the PRAG 2025 revision. We had always advocated that a project should start with a log-frame and budget. Our recommended approach was to structure the narrative from activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and finally to impact. Seeing that the experts at the European Commission shared the same ideas was a great source of satisfaction for me during the revision of the *Manual*.

The preamble of a book should not usually be this long. However, this *Manual* is the outcome of years of ongoing interaction within the project sector. That’s why I find it more appropriate to describe the content not as “what I know” but as “what I’ve learned.” Every section is derived from real experiences. A question asked by a municipal staff member during a training session, a topic debated at length in a meeting, or a problem we brought upon ourselves due to a mistake in implementation...

Taking the entire journey into account, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the superiors who supported my work at every stage, encouraging me to take on challenges beyond my comfort zone. I am equally grateful to my dedicated teammates, who not only embraced the vision of each project but stood beside me with solid commitment. My sincere thanks go to all the institutions and organisations (whether named here or not) that we collaborated with along the way; to the municipalities that welcomed our efforts; and to the donor institutions whose resources brought our ideas to life. I am especially grateful to my doctoral advisor, whose guidance greatly sharpened my ability to express complex ideas through writing. Lastly, and most profoundly, I thank my family—for their patience, support, and quiet endurance throughout the years of long hours, constant travel, and relentless workload; and to my sister for reviewing and proofreading my text.

This Manual, *Proposal: EU Project Development Manual*, is my personal note of gratitude to the EU project community. For that reason, anyone who wishes may print it, read it and make use of it freely.

Cemal BAŞ, 2025

OBJECTIVES OF THE MANUAL

The main objective of this *Manual* is to present the development process of European Union projects under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) in a clear, step-by-step manner. Tailored for beginners in EU project writing, the *Manual* covers all key stages from idea generation to logical framework development, budgeting, activity planning, impact analysis, and submission by using simplified language. The content has been streamlined and made accessible for those unfamiliar with technical terms, supported by practical examples and exercises that enable users to steer the process independently.

A core aim of the *Manual* is full alignment with the 2025 version of PRAG (Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions), the European Commission’s principal reference for managing external aid. The structure of the guide reflects key updates in PRAG 2025, ensuring that applicants and evaluators work with the most current text and procedures.

The *Manual* also integrates the European Union’s institutional project management tool, Project Management Methodology (PM²), into the writing process. PM²’s structured approach supports idea refinement, stakeholder engagement, risk analysis, and linking outputs to impacts. The examples and guidance follow this methodology, helping users not only draft successful proposals but also anticipate implementation challenges. As such, the *Manual* serves as a practical capacity-building tool.

Except for the “The Quest for a Unified Europe” section, all historical narratives, information on the enlargement process, financial data, as well as details related to PM² and PRAG 2025 have been sourced from official websites with a “.eu” domain. By doing so, the *Manual* aims to create “The European Union Way” of proposal writing.

The ultimate objective of this *Manual* is to become a core reference tool in IPA countries, used in EU project training programs. Designed to be easily adapted across various institutional contexts, its balanced mix of technical content and practical application makes it suitable for different types and levels of learners. The *Manual* is intended to function as a reference book, standardised training material, and hands-on learning resource throughout the IPA region.

This text (Proposal) has been edited with the support of AI grammar assistance to ensure a smooth reading experience for all readers.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

This *Manual* has been prepared for all actors involved in the drafting, evaluation, and management of European Union projects. Therefore, it serves as a comprehensive and practical guide particularly for technical experts, project coordinators, and financial managers working in institutions and organisations applying for grant programs under the IPA framework.

Project developers in the IPA region are the primary target audience of this *Manual*. For municipalities, public institutions, universities, NGOs, and private sector representatives, all phases of the project application process are presented with clear explanations and examples. The *Manual* provides guidance on topics such as developing a logical framework, drafting budgets, planning activities, and designing impact pathways.

Experts working at contracting authorities may also significantly benefit from this resource. Structural approaches used in the preparation of grant programs, information meetings, evaluation processes, and monitoring activities are supported by the content of this *Manual*. Moreover, it can serve as a control guide when offering technical guidance to applicants.

From the perspective of independent evaluators, the *Manual* offers a methodological viewpoint useful in analysing project proposals. The content includes guidance on core elements such as the coherence between activities and budget, and the relationship between outputs and impacts.

Trainers and training institutions may use this *Manual* as a source material. With its structured narrative, important notes, sample text and practice-oriented examples such as “From the Field” boxes, the narrative provides easily understandable and modular content for project-writing training programs.

Consultancy firms and freelance consultants may also benefit from this *Manual* in both preparing proposals and delivering services to institutions. The examples, templates, and shared experiences presented throughout the project development process contribute to strengthening their technical competence.

Finally, the *Manual* serves as a foundational resource for newcomers working in contracting authorities, technical assistance firms, EU project units, and related institutions. Covering the evolution of EU cooperation from its historical roots to the current IPA funding framework, the text offers readers a clear and structured overview of the environment they are entering, making it an ideal starting point for orientation.

ABBREVIATIONS

BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research (originally: Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire)
CFCU	Central Finance and Contracts Unit
CfP	Call for Proposals
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
CPM	Critical Path Method
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CUNY	City University of New York
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DG ENEST	Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood
DG FPI	Directorate-General for Foreign Policy Instruments
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DG MENA	Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Development Fund
ePRAG	Electronic Practical Guide (to contract procedures for EU external actions)
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations
ESCS	European Coal and Steel Community
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
F&T Portal	Funding & Tenders Portal
FNLC	Financing Not Linked to Costs
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GIS	Geographic Information System
GNI	Gross National Income
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LED	Local Economic Development
M	Month
M&C	Monitoring and Control
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
Manual	PROPOSAL: Eu Project Development Manual
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
N/A	Not Applicable
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDICI-Global	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAPEC	Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PCT	Project Core Team
PERT	Programme Evaluation Committee
PM ²	Project Management Methodology
PRAG	Practical Guide (to contract procedures for EU external actions)
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PST	Project Support Team
RASCI	Responsible, Accountable, Supports, Consulted and Informed
RFID	Radio-Frequency Identification
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SCO	Simplified Cost Options
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
THY	Türk Hava Yolları (Turkish Airlines)
UMT	Union of Municipalities of Türkiye
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UN	United Nations
VAT	Value Added Tax

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CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1.1. The Quest for a Unified Europe

European civilisation developed around the Mediterranean during Ancient Greece and later spread to Central Europe with the Roman Empire. The fall of Rome triggered new power dynamics on the continent, particularly with Viking trade networks laying the foundations of cities outside Rome's influence. Throughout the Middle Ages, the desire to preserve Rome's legacy inspired efforts to unite Europe. However, national interests and dynastic rivalries left these attempts unsuccessful.

Augustus, as the founder and first emperor of the Roman Empire, can be considered a pioneer of efforts to unify Europe. The period that began in 27 BC, when Augustus assumed all powers of the Roman Republic, united a vast geography in terms of law, language, and culture. The Roman Empire, with visionary leaders – who understood the necessity of connecting continental Europe and a unitary administrative system that reduced trade costs – became a structure unprecedented in history at the time. Expanding borders through conquests transformed the Mediterranean into a Roman lake. Augustus also initiated the Pax Romana, a period of peace and prosperity, achieving Europe's political and economic unity. Through a centralised administration, diverse European communities were united, creating an order that shaped Western civilisation for centuries.

Charlemagne, the Frankish king who moved with the dream of uniting Europe, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III on 25 December 800, roughly around 350 years after Rome's fall. The emperor, who conquered much of Western and Central Europe, provided significant support to the Church to spread Christianity and unite his people while receiving political backing from the Church in return. During this period, the Carolingian Renaissance, marked by advancement in education and art, ignited a cultural revival in post-Roman Europe. Charlemagne is often called the "Father of Europe" and he owes this title to the anonymous Paderborn Epic which immortalised him as "Rex, Pater Europae (King and Father of Europe)" for shaping Europe's unity (Ailes, 2012).

Although Western European dynasties did not consider the Eastern Roman Empire as the true continuation of Rome, it survived the 5th-century upheavals that reshaped Western Europe. This continuity ended with Mehmed II's conquest in 1453. Declaring himself "Caesar of Rome," Mehmed claimed the Roman legacy and showed deep interest in Ancient Greek and Roman history. His 1480 capture of Otranto clearly signalled his imperial ambitions in Europe, particularly in the city of Rome. However, his sudden death the following year triggered unrest within the Ottoman Empire, halting its campaign on the Italian Peninsula. Despite this, the military technologies developed during his reign (especially gunpowder-based firearms) spread across Europe, weakening feudal lordships and strengthening monarchies. Moreover, his invitation to European scholars to work freely in the Empire's new capital (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025a) and the founding of the Sahn-ı Seman university, ignited intellectual debates on the freedom of expression across Europe – discussions considered foundational to the European Renaissance.

In 1464, George of Poděbrady (the King of Bohemia), proposed a plan titled The Treaty on the Establishment of Peace Throughout Christendom, aiming to unite the Catholic states of Europe in a pact of peace and cooperation against the Ottoman-Europe, predominantly inhabited by Muslims and Orthodox Christians (Dhondt, 2020). Presented to King Louis XI of France, this plan included regular intergovernmental meetings, joint defence mechanisms, and peaceful resolution of conflicts within a confederation framework. However, the proposal was ignored due to tensions between the Church and

dynasties, including inter-state rivalries. Nonetheless, this initiative went down in history as the first concrete idea to approach European unity with diplomacy and cooperation as priorities.

The Peace of Westphalia (1648), which ended the Thirty Years' War, introduced the principle of state sovereignty. The treaty created an order where independent states could work together while defining Europe's borders. In certain respects, Westphalia served as a cornerstone for modern international law. The principle of sovereignty emphasised a model in which diverse cultures and nations could co-exist under a shared European identity. The Westphalian order failed to bring long-term peace to Europe, yet, it is regarded by some as the beginning of modern diplomatic systems based on cooperation (Bring, 2000).

The Enlightenment of the 18th century elevated the idea of a European identity based on reason, human rights, and universal values. Thinkers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant wrote on the concepts of peace and international cooperation. Kant's work of Perpetual Peace proposed a federation of republics to prevent wars. The Enlightenment era shaped European identity around individual freedoms and human values while encouraging cooperation in international relations.

Napoleon Bonaparte, a skilled soldier inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, dreamed also of uniting Europe. In 1804, he declared himself Emperor of France and undertook widespread conquests. He attempted to govern much of Europe with the Napoleonic Code, which influenced modern legal systems still in use today. Although Napoleon aimed to spread the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, his efforts found little support due to being military-driven. His defeat at Waterloo in 1815 sealed the end of Napoleon's dominance in Europe.

Following the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) aimed to restore order and stability in Europe once again. Through the balance of power policy, the agreement sought to prevent any nation from dominating the continent. The treaty, while defining borders in Europe, also established a framework where independent states could collaborate. Additionally, the foundation of the "Concert of Europe" system was laid, which envisaged regular meetings among Great Powers. The congress strengthened European identity through diplomacy and concepts of collective security. Though, suppressing liberal and nationalist movements led to the resurfacing of these ideas with the revolutions of 1848.

Adolf Hitler, as the leader of German Reich, attempted to unify Europe, pursuing his goal through militarism, much like leaders before him, but driven by the ideology of Nazism. After coming to power in 1933, he initiated a large-scale war across Europe based on theories of racial superiority and Lebensraum (a Nazi policy in the 1930s and 1940s aimed at territorial expansion). During World War II, he occupied much of Europe, aiming to establish a "New Order" (Hitler's vision for dominance and racial hierarchy). Nevertheless, this attempt led to widespread destruction across Europe and the deaths of millions. Hitler's effort to unify Europe ended completely with the collapse of the Nazi regime in 1945.

Throughout history, the European continent has been the target of attempts by various leaders and powers to unite it through wars. From the Roman Empire to Charlemagne, from Napoleon to Hitler, many efforts aimed to bring the continent under a single administration through military victories. Still, these attempts failed to achieve a sustainable unity due to Europe's diversity, cultural richness, and the desire for independence among its peoples. Wars and conflicts have left deep scars on the continent, costing the lives of millions.

1.2. An Era of Peace

The European continent witnessed two devastating world wars during the first half of the 20th century. These wars destroyed much of the continent, claimed the lives of millions, and deeply shook social structures. European leaders, especially after World War II, aimed to prevent wars to protect Europe from further destruction. Compared to medieval times, wars in modern Europe spread much faster, and their effects were felt across the continent due to strong connectivity. The pursuit of common peace and cooperation, initiated the first steps for the framework of modern Europe. This transformation process, beginning in 1945 and leading to the European Community, became the cornerstone of political and economic integration, as well as peace and stability.

In May 1945, World War II ended, marking the beginning of a war-free period for Europe. However, despite the end of the war, the destruction it left behind posed the greatest challenge (European Union [EU], 2025a). Almost all European cities were in ruins, and millions of people were left homeless and unemployed. The reconstruction of Europe required more than physical recovery. It also demanded the establishment of a lasting peace order. Consequently, increasing cooperation among countries, particularly in Western Europe, and creating a peaceful continent became a primary policy goal.

The year 1949 was another significant turning point in shaping Europe's future. On 4 April 1949, NATO was established. This security alliance, including the United States, Canada, and ten Western European countries, aimed at strengthening the West's military defence and counterbalance the Soviet Union. NATO's formation reinforced the idea of collective security and encouraged cooperation among Western European countries. In the same year, on 5 May, the Council of Europe was founded. The Council prioritised democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as its political objectives across continental Europe. With the European Convention on Human Rights entering into force in 1953, a legal framework for the protection of individual rights was established at the European level.

One of the most concrete steps toward strengthening economic ties and trade cooperation in Europe was proposed by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in 1950. Schuman suggested placing the production of coal and steel (the two most critical resources of the time) under common management (EU, 2025b). Centralising control over these resources was proposed as a mechanism to reduce the possibility of war among countries. The proposal became the first step in the vision of post-war European cooperation. 9 May, the day Schuman presented his proposal, is still celebrated as Europe Day.

The Schuman Declaration began to be implemented on 18 April 1951 with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). An agreement among France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg united the coal and steel industries of these countries under a common administration. The ECSC created an environment of security by placing control of war resources beyond national interests. The institutional structure that emerged also served as a model for broader European integration.

By 1957, the six ECSC member countries had decided to deepen their economic cooperation. On 25 March 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed, establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). These treaties led to deeper economic cooperation and solidified the idea of a common market in Europe. Coming into effect on 1 January 1958, the treaty is considered as the beginning of wider economic integration in Europe. The common market aimed to promote the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour, thereby increasing the continent's economic prosperity.

The 1960s witnessed a period of economic growth for the European Economic Community (EU, 2025c). The removal of customs duties among member countries reduced trade costs and strengthened economic integration. Additionally, the Common Agricultural Policy, adopted in 1962, established a joint control mechanism over food production. Building on the success of cooperation in the coal and steel industries, European trade collaboration then expanded further into agriculture. While the agricultural policy resolved food shortages in Europe, it also led to issues like surplus.

Moreover, Europe's peace process was not limited to economic cooperation. The Yaounde Convention, signed in 1963 between the European Economic Community and the Associated African States and Madagascar, promoted trade and cooperation between European countries and former colonies in Africa. The agreement demonstrated the new Europe's capability to develop joint policies on a transcontinental and global level.

Another milestone in European integration was the signing of the Merger Treaty in Brussels on 8 April 1965. This treaty unified the executive bodies of the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, and Euratom, creating a single administrative structure under the name of the European Communities. Coming into effect on 1 July 1967, the treaty gave European cooperation a more institutional framework.

The period of peace in Europe, which began in 1945, progressed on solid foundations. Initiatives such as NATO, the Council of Europe, the Treaty of Rome, and the Merger Treaty institutionalised the understanding of trade benefits and cooperation on the continent. The process leading to the European Community not only prevented wars but also increased the prosperity of the Europeans, strengthening the idea and identity of Europe on a continental scale.

1.3. From Community to Union

From the 1960s onward, Europe took significant steps toward economic and political integration with the purpose of achieving further prosperity and stability. In 1968, the establishment of a Customs Union among EEC member states removed another major barrier to reduce trade costs and enable the free movement of goods. The agreement strengthened economic cooperation and increased trade volumes across the continent. However, the 1960s were also shaped by social movements and political tensions. The 1968 student uprisings in Paris emerged as a reaction to social inequalities and government policies, while the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia was suppressed by Soviet intervention. These events demonstrated a need for political and social solidarity in Europe alongside economic integration. EU leaders also recognised that the Union had been constructed from the top down since 1949, and that more people-driven initiatives were now essential to foster genuine unity and inclusion.

The 1970s were a period of accelerated efforts for both European expansion and solidarity (EU, 2025d). In 1973, Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined the European Communities, raising the number of members from six to nine. However, the expansion was overshadowed by the economic down-turn triggered by the oil crisis that same year. In October 1973, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) imposed a total oil embargo on nations supporting Israel during the Arab-Israeli War. Rising energy prices due to the Middle East conflict severely impacted European economies. In response, the European Regional Development Fund was established to channel resources to less developed regions and reduce economic disparities. At the same time, the fall of dictatorships in Portugal, Greece, and Spain accelerated the democratisation

process in potential member states. In 1979, the first direct elections to the European Parliament reinforced the Parliament's legitimacy and its connection with European citizens.

The 1980s were marked by changes in East-West relations and the addition of new members to the European Communities (EU, 2025e). Greece joined in 1981, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986, increasing the number of member countries to 12. During this period, the Single European Act introduced regulations to facilitate the functioning of the common market, aiming to remove national barriers to economic integration. The Erasmus Program was launched in 1987, bringing European youth together. Fostering cultural and academic exchange, the program became one of the most successful initiatives for instilling a sense of European identity among young people. However, the most significant event of the decade was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This development accelerated the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and set the stage for European enlargement.

The 1990s represent the transformation of the European Communities into the European Union (EU, 2025f). Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Eastern European countries became more closely involved in the integration process, bringing significant changes to the continent's political landscape. Finally, the Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992 with the aim of deepened economic and political integration, instituted the framework for the common currency (the Euro) and enhanced cooperation in foreign policy and security. With the Treaty entering into force on 1 November 1993, the European Union was officially established.

1.4. Steps Toward Institutionalisation

The institutionalisation of the European Union can be explained by the deepening of integration and the strengthening of cooperation among member states. The process, which began with the implementation of the Single Market in 1993, strengthened economic ties by enabling the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people. The adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 followed this trend, expanding the concept of EU citizenship and placing greater emphasis on employment policies. In 1999, the introduction of the Euro for commercial and financial transactions stated a turning point in Europe's economic integration. With the release of euro banknotes and coins in 2002, economic integration became a tangible part of daily life (EU, 2025g).

In 2004, the accession of 10 new countries from Central and Eastern Europe strengthened Europe's position as a global actor. On the other hand, the surprising rejection of the EU Constitution in referendums in France and the Netherlands, despite its approval by 18 member states, highlighted the need for institutional reform. In 2007, the accession of Bulgaria and Romania brought the number of member states to 27, making the structural functioning of the EU increasingly complex. To overcome the institutional and organizational challenges of an expanding Europe, the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force in 2009, was put forward to reorganize the EU's structure; however, this did not prevent the growing criticism of certain European-level institutions.

1.5. Facing Challenges

The global economic crisis (EU, 2025h) that began in 2008 was a significant turning point for the European Union. The financial collapse originating from the U.S. mortgage market deeply affected many European banks and caused economic instability across the continent. The crisis worsened social and economic problems in countries struggling with public debt and budget deficits. To support economic recovery, the EU established tighter economic cooperation mechanisms among member

states and tried to enhance the reliability of the financial system through structures like the Banking Union. Another unfortunate issue during this period was the terror attacks which also shook Europe and its free movement mechanisms. Incidents in cities such as Paris, Brussels, and Berlin prompted the EU to reassess its security policies.

Additionally, the refugee crisis that began affecting the EU in the early 2010s resulted in over one million individuals applying for asylum within the Union. The crisis increased the pressure on the EU's external borders and humanitarian aid capacity while creating significant disagreements among member states over migration policies.

On top of these challenges, in 2016, the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union further strained the Union's political cohesion. In a referendum, 52% of voters in the UK supported Brexit, denoting the first time in EU history that a member state decided to leave. Brexit affected both the EU's global image and the political and economic balance within the Union.

All these developments brought a series of challenges that tested Europe's resilience. After lengthy negotiations and debates, the United Kingdom officially left the European Union on 31 January 2020, completing the Brexit process.

1.6. Expanding the Union

The European Union's enlargement process has been a key factor in transforming a community of six founding members into a 27-member Western bloc (EU, 2025i). Enlargement has promoted peace, stability, and prosperity across Europe, strengthened democratic governance. The enlargement policy provides mutual benefits for both the EU and the member countries. For new member states, the process offers political stability, economic growth through access to the single market, financial support from EU funds, and opportunities for citizens to live, work, and study across Europe. From the EU's perspective, the same process enhances EU's global influence, expands its market, and increases its share in global trade. Furthermore, enlargement promotes cultural diversity and strengthens commitments to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights — fundamental values of inclusive societies that go beyond purely capitalist motivations.

The accession process is built upon specific criteria to ensure compliance with EU standards and principles (EU, 2025j). The Treaty on the European Union outlines the conditions (Article 49) and principles (Article 6/1) a country must meet to join the EU (Eur-lex, 2012). Fulfilling these measures is a compulsory process for accession, as outlined by the Copenhagen criteria. The criteria was first drawn in 1993 then reaffirmed in 1995 and it require candidate countries to demonstrate stable democratic institutions, a functioning market economy, and the capacity to effectively implement EU law. Alignment with the objectives of political, economic, and monetary union is also among the requirements.

The process consists of three stages: candidacy, membership negotiations, and accession. The Western Balkans follow a unique enlargement process called the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) which is a specific process to politically and economically stabilise these partners to prepare them for EU membership. This process involves Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. In addition to the Western Balkans, Türkiye, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine hold candidate status, while Kosovo is classified as a potential candidate.

The European Union (EU) conducts a comprehensive approval process to ensure the full membership of new member states. Candidate countries must align with EU standards and rules and secure the support of their own citizens through parliamentary decisions or referendums. During membership negotiations, the candidate country's ability to adopt and implement EU legislation is constantly assessed. Issues such as financial arrangements, transition periods, and contributions to the EU budget are also addressed separately. Throughout the process, the European Commission monitors each candidate's progress and provides guidance. Developments and criticisms related to the progress are shared with the public through annual progress reports. These reports also form the basis for accession funding by shaping the topics and thematic priorities of projects to be supported financially.

CHAPTER 2: POLICY AND FINANCING

2.1. The Link Between Policy and Financing

Understanding the relationship between policy and financing is the first concrete step to success in the application process for any grant or financial support. In particular, for the European Union's grant programs, evaluation criteria include not only a project's technical adequacy but also its alignment with the EU's policy objectives. At the *concept note* stage, policy relevance often outweighs the project's content. The financial resources provided by the EU are tools to achieve the policy goals that the EU has officially set. This approach is common and applied across the EU framework as well as other grant-awarding institutions. Therefore, understanding the policy-financing relationship is a cornerstone. To grasp the nature of this relationship, one must take a step back and consider it from a broader perspective: "Who gives something for free to anyone?" The answer to this question is simple: "No one!" Grant financing is a mechanism built on mutual interests.

A relevant analogy can be parents who want their child to play the piano. If parents wish for their child to play, they also understand that simply expressing this desire or imagining it isn't enough to develop the necessary skill. To achieve their goal, they must mobilise their resources, both financial and emotional. They buy a piano, enrol the child in lessons, and encourage them throughout the process. Similarly, the EU has certain ideals to strengthen its institutional structure. Examples of these ideals include economic growth, continental peace, sustainable development and human rights protection. However, realising these ideals requires concrete action beyond rhetoric. At this point, the EU's financing mechanisms come into play. The EU uses funds as a tool to achieve its policy objectives. That said, those who wish to benefit from these funds must clearly demonstrate their alignment with the EU's goals.

2.2. The Necessity of EU Enlargement

Since its establishment, the European Union has positioned growth and expansion in its core strategies. Enlargement is a process that strengthens both the EU's economic capacity and its political influence. However, expansion is more than a choice, it is a necessity. Like any economic organisation, the EU must continue to grow. Organisations that reject or resist growth either enter a process of internal decline or remain overshadowed by larger entities. Therefore, the enlargement policy is both a survival strategy and a means for the EU to increase its global economic impact.

The macroeconomic concept of "excess capacity" is another term to explain the enlargement process. Over time, an economy's production capacity may surpass the demands of its existing market. In such cases, finding new markets becomes essential. Accessing new markets is on one hand an economic goal but on the other a political one. Through its enlargement policy, the EU expands its economic boundaries and grows its market by incorporating new members.

Brands like Coca-Cola or Red Bull continue to advertise and invest despite their dominant market positions, reflecting the principle that "those who do not grow, shrink". For instance, although Red Bull already dominates its market, it ventures into fields like extreme sports to maintain and expand its market value. Similarly, the EU cannot simply protect its existing markets; it must also gain new ones.

The concept of "connectivity" lies at the core of the European Union's success in the integration process. Connectivity refers to strengthening physical infrastructure as well as economic, social, and cultural ties. The development of land, maritime, and air transport between EU member states has

reduced trade costs and deepened economic relations among the members. The freedom of movement for individuals has supported the strengthening of social and cultural ties across the continent.

Additionally, the euro, the EU's common currency, has facilitated trade among member states, improved price stability, and reinforced economic bonds. Yet, this success should not be limited to existing member states. New markets and member states must also be included in the integration process. In creating new markets, the incentive mechanisms used under the EU's enlargement policy play a critical role. One such mechanism is the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) funds, which are categorised under the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework and serve as key tools for supporting accession efforts.

2.3. Multiannual Financial Frameworks

The European Union (EU) budget is a financial tool that brings together the resources of member states to achieve goals that no single member state could accomplish alone. The shared budget enables the EU to finance projects to address common challenges across the continent and beyond such as promoting economic growth and improving solidarity. The EU budget primarily focuses on investment and supports the national budgets of member states.

The budget is funded by contributions from member states and various other sources (EU, 2025k). The funding includes a portion of gross national income (GNI) based on each member state's economic capacity, customs duties on imports from outside the EU, and a specific percentage of Value Added Tax (VAT) collected by member states. Additional sources of income include contributions for non-recycled plastic packaging waste, fines, and interest. The core principle of the budget is that expenditures must not exceed revenues.

The EU budget operates under two main frameworks: the long-term budget known as the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the annual budget aligned with MFF priorities. Negotiating and adopting the MFF occurs through the process of collaboration between the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the EU. It is the Commission that proposes the budget, which is then debated and approved by the Parliament and the Council (EU, 2025l).

The MFF sets spending priorities for seven-year periods, allowing the EU to plan its funding programs in advance (EU, 2025m). The budget defines maximum annual spending limits and major expenditure categories. The current MFF covers the 2021–2027 period and, together with the NextGenerationEU recovery fund, forms a pool of approximately € 2 trillion. The seven-year budget cycle allows a balance between long-term financial stability and flexibility. Additionally, MFF aligns with the EU's political cycles, covering two Commission terms, which gives newly elected officials the opportunity to shape budgetary priorities.

2.4. Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

The primary financial instrument implemented by the European Union to support reforms in candidate countries during the enlargement process is called the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Since 2007, IPA's main objective has been to build capacity in beneficiary countries (candidates) by providing financial and technical support. This budget heading prioritises political, economic, social and administrative reforms as part of the countries' progress toward EU membership.

During its first phase (2007–2013), the IPA was implemented with a budget of €11.5 billion. The subsequent phase, IPA II (2014–2020), had a budget of €12.8 billion (Table 1). The current beneficiaries of the IPA include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye.

Table 1: Country-Based Commitments Under IPA I & II (European Commission [EC], 2025a)		
<i>Country</i>	<i>Total (2007 – 2013) (in million Euro)</i>	<i>Total (2014 – 2020) (in million Euro)</i>
<i>Albania</i>	520	758
<i>Bosnia & Herzegovina</i>	521	539
<i>Kosovo</i>	678	573
<i>Montenegro</i>	206	269
<i>North Macedonia</i>	478	633
<i>Serbia</i>	1.344	1404
<i>Türkiye</i>	4.392	3186

Under the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021–2027, the budget for IPA III has been set at €14.162 billion (Table 2). The European Commission has also issued a Delegated Regulation specifying thematic priorities unique to IPA III, along with an Implementing Regulation outlining implementation details (EC, 2025b). The IPA III programming framework is divided into five thematic windows, designed to support beneficiary countries in the EU enlargement process.

The first window focusing on “Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights, and Democracy” aims to strengthen judicial independence, protect fundamental human rights, and reinforce democratic institutions. Key issues such as combating corruption and preventing organised crime are also addressed.

The second window, titled “Good Governance, Alignment with the EU Acquis, Neighbouring Relations, and Strategic Communication” addresses modernising public administration, improving public financial management, and increasing transparency in policy development. The window also supports projects that promote regional cooperation and good relations with neighbouring countries.

The third window, “Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity,” targets environmental sustainability and energy efficiency. Strategic objectives include environmental protection, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting the use of renewable energy sources. Alignment with the EU’s Green Deal is the main focus of this window.

The fourth window, “Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth,” aims to support economic growth. The window focuses on labour market reforms, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the promotion of innovative initiatives. Education, research, and digitalisation in the labour market are also among other topics which the window supports.

The fifth and final window, “Regional and Cross-Border Cooperation,” seeks to foster regional development through cross-border cooperation projects. Key areas include infrastructure projects, trade facilitation, and cultural exchange programs. This window plays a significant role in encouraging regional stability and multi-country partnership.

Table 2: IPA III Indicative Budget Allocations (EC, 2025b)		
<i>IPA Windows</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total (Euro M)</i>
<i>Window 1: Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy</i>	<i>15,13</i>	<i>2.089</i>
<i>Window 2: Good governance, EU acquis alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication</i>	<i>16,59</i>	<i>2.291</i>
<i>Window 3: Green agenda and sustainable connectivity</i>	<i>42,25</i>	<i>5.860</i>
<i>Window 4: Competitiveness and inclusive growth</i>	<i>22,31</i>	<i>3.080</i>
<i>Window 5: Territorial and cross-border cooperation</i>	<i>3,51</i>	<i>485</i>
<i>Total Operational Budget</i>	<i>%100</i>	<i>13.804</i>

CHAPTER 3: PRAG 2025 AND PM² 3.1

3.1. PRAG and PM² Combined

This *Manual* is a comprehensive resource specifically designed for project development processes within the framework of the European Union's external actions. There in its development, it has been fully aligned with the Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions (PRAG). The key strength of this *Manual* lies in its exclusive focus on EU external actions, providing detailed coverage of the rules and procedures required under PRAG.

Additionally, the guide integrates the EU's latest version of Project Management Methodology (PM²), offering the most up-to-date version of available resources. By combining the procedural discipline of PRAG with the structured framework of PM², the *Manual* introduces a new approach to EU project preparation. This dual approach will enable users to understand the financial and procedural requirements of EU external actions while allowing them to prepare and structure their projects in the EU-way.

3.2. Practical Guide to Contract Procedures

Just as every country has its own regulations for procurement processes, PRAG (Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions) is a general guide that defines the procedures to be followed for projects financially supported by the European Union's resources. PRAG outlines the fundamental principles for managing procurement of goods and services through grants, as well as financial management processes funded by grants (ePRAG, 2025a, Art. 1.1). Another role of PRAG is to ensure that those preparing project proposals, contractors in tenders, and contracting authorities understand the procedures uniformly.

Since projects from the 2014-2020 funding period (MFF and EDF) are still ongoing alongside new projects under the 2021-2027 MFF, PRAG includes procedures from both periods and applies to funding tools like NDICI-Global Europe, IPA III and the Ukraine Facility. The system is used by several parts of the European Commission, including Directorate General (DG) INTPA, DG FPI, and, as of February 1, 2025, two new directorates: DG MENA and DG ENEST. These two have replaced the body formerly known as DG NEAR.

Although PRAG is a framework designed for the EU's external actions, specific agreements or different internal procedures may override its rules in certain cases (ePRAG, 2025a, Art. 1.2). For example, PRAG does not apply to contracts managed directly by the European Commission, or to grants under the DG for Budget and the DG for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). Twinning grants also follow a separate guide, though some of their rules still refer to PRAG.

Similarly, PRAG may not apply when international organisations or institutions implementing EU-funded programs as entrusted entities (an organisation assigned by the European Commission to carry out budget implementation tasks under Article 62(1c) of the Financial Regulation through a contribution agreement) follow their own internal procedures. For example, if a UN agency implements a project in an IPA beneficiary country using EU funds, the UN's financial rules are followed. Additionally, when the implementation of a grant requires procurement by the beneficiary, the beneficiary may apply its own national procedures – provided that these comply with the common

principles (Table 3) set out in Annex IV of the standard grant contract – and is therefore not required to strictly follow PRAG.

Table 3: General Principles of PRAG of Grants (ePRAG, 2025a, Art. 2.5.2)	
<i>Principle</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Transparency</i>	<i>Share clear, up-to-date, and useful information with the public.</i>
<i>Equal Treatment</i>	<i>Treat all beneficiaries equally throughout the process.</i>
<i>Co-Financing</i>	<i>Costs must be shared between the EU and beneficiaries.</i>
<i>No-Profit</i>	<i>Grants cannot result in financial profit.</i>
<i>No-Cumulative Award</i>	<i>Each action or year may receive only one grant.</i>
<i>Non-Retroactivity</i>	<i>Funding cannot cover completed past actions.</i>

The EU’s digitalisation strategies, supported under the “Path to the Digital Decade” policy, aim to expand digital services provided by EU institutions. The program sets various objectives and indicators for digitalisation by 2030, focusing on four key areas: skills, trade, public services, and infrastructure (EC, 2025c). In line with this policy, PRAG has introduced innovations for electronic processes in recent years. The *eSubmission* system allows applicants to prepare and submit proposals electronically. This system is used in international procedures, making processes faster and more secure. Still, electronic management does not alter PRAG’s fundamental rules; rather, it enhances their efficiency and modernity. PRAG’s official website also offers options and annexes for both electronic and traditional methods.

“A grant is a financial contribution made by a contracting authority by way of donation to one or more beneficiaries for the purpose of carrying out an action or implementing a work programme.” (ePRAG, 2025a, Art. 2.5.2)

Under PRAG rules, a “grant” refers to financial contributions made by the European Commission to one or more beneficiaries to carry out an activity or implement a work programme. Grants are a tool for supporting EU policies and achieving its overarching objectives. PRAG categorises grants into two types:

- Action grants: Financing activities aimed at achieving EU policies.
- Operating grants: Supporting the functioning of entities working in the EU’s general interest or aligned with specific EU policy objectives.

If it is read in the right way, the PRAG is a very helpful tool for EU project developers. Additionally, the PRAG website features tools such as the “Concept Note Evaluation Grid (E5a)” and “Evaluation Grid for the Full Application Form (E5b)” which provide insight into how project proposals are scored and assessed, offering guidance proposal development strategy.

Important Note – 1
<p><i>The ePRAG website provides access to the most up-to-date versions of key documents including the Glossary of Terms, Application Form, Guidelines for Grant Applicants, Logical Framework, Budget, and the Standard Grant Contract.</i></p> <p>https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/spaces/ExactExternalWiki/pages/152798604/ePRAG</p>

3.3. Project Management Methodology

Project Management Methodology (PM²) was created by the European Commission and developed specifically for institutions, organisations, and agencies within the European Union (EC, 2025d). The methodology combines globally recognised best practices with the experiences of EU institutions. PM² provides a comprehensive framework for managing projects, programmes, and portfolios, and is accessible free of charge to encourage its widespread use across Europe. PM² is coordinated as part of the digital transformation by the Methodologies Office under the Directorate-General for Digital Services of the European Commission. The primary aim of this office is to develop, support, and promote various methodologies for the Commission, which can also be utilised by all other EU institutions, bodies, and agencies.

The PM² methodology provides guidance for managing the entire lifecycle of a project according to the EU approach. The methodology facilitates the production of project deliverables within time and cost constraints, thereby increasing the value of projects. Over time, PM² has evolved to expand its scope. Initially designed to support internal projects within the European Commission, it has been adapted to meet the needs of organisations of all sizes – transitioning from project management to program and portfolio management to enhance overall organisational success.

The impact of PM² is not limited to applications within the European Commission only. In 2021, the methodology was included as a solution in the European Union’s Alignment Toolbox for European Public Services. That same year, it was also integrated into the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations (ESCO) classification system. These developments demonstrate that PM² has gone beyond being just a methodology and has become a standard which influences project management practices across Europe.

Key publications supporting the ongoing development of the methodology include the PM² Project Management Guide, PM² Agile Guide, PM² Program Management Guide, and PM² Portfolio Management Guide (EC, 2025e). The most recent version, PM² Project Management Guide v3.1, was published in 2023 which is the version this *Manuel* has taken in to account.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN PRAG 2025?

4.1. Changes in Application Form

The Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions (PRAG), used by the European Commission for external aid projects, has been comprehensively updated as of 2025 (ePRAG, 2025b). The updates introduced aim to ease the workload for stakeholders operating under ePRAG and to strengthen results-oriented approaches. These changes affect several core areas, including contract types, implementation procedures, call for proposal documents, evaluation processes, and reporting mechanisms.

However, since this proposal has been developed specifically for grants awarded in EU candidate countries, this section will focus in particular on the updates made to grant implementation (Section 6. Grants of PRAG).

In the PRAG 2025 revision, minor alterations seem to have been made to the *concept note*, while most changes are observed in the *full application* document. Although some expressions in the *concept note* section have been rearranged, no modifications necessitate new learning.

In the previous version of the *concept note* document, the “Summary of the Action” section included a concise overview of the project, including the budget, target groups, location, and duration. However, in the new version, the summary section only covers information related to objectives, final beneficiaries, outputs, activities, and target groups. The remaining information is now requested toward the end of the document. There has been no change in the questions asked to explain the project idea. On the other hand, a new section titled “Project Details” has been introduced at the end of the document, in which location, duration, project title, and budget information must be provided. Additionally, the previously detailed “self-check list” has been simplified in the new version, and most of the supporting documents have now been deferred to the *full application* phase.

When the *full application* document is examined, the section titled “2.1.1. Description” appears to have significantly changed, with the 18-page narrative that constitutes the main justification of the project being redesigned. Among the major changes is the requirement to present the narrative in a structure that first focuses on activities, then outputs, followed by outcomes, and finally impacts. It is expected that the entire process be described through the Theory of Change approach, and that the provided indicator tables be completed. In other words, the Log Frame document has been integrated into the “2.1.1. Description” section of the *full application* form. Furthermore, the activities matrix (which previously included only the “activities, means, and assumptions” headings) has been expanded in detail. A section that was previously often ignored by applicants, has now become a crucial part of the project application.

4.2. Reimbursement vs FNLC

Before diving into the details and technical explanations, it should be clearly stated that the Financing Not Link to Cost (FNLC) model (which has caused considerable confusion following the 2025 revision) is not likely to be applied to traditional small action, environmental, capacity-building, awareness-raising, or, in other words, soft projects with multiple components and diverse activities. Based on the annexes and explanations in the new documents, FNLC appears to be primarily intended for use by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Partnerships, which manages development cooperation and external aid programmes.

The model may also be used by the DG for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (meaning IPA funding), but calls launched under FNLC model usually require very clear and pre-defined outputs. For instance, the call might support the implementation of a vocational training programme recognised in Europe, to be delivered in candidate countries, where financial support is granted per trained person. On the other hand, such a project would typically be easier to implement in cooperation with national institutions or entrusted entities with pre-established agreements. In other words, it would not be very efficient for local governments, NGOs, universities, development agencies, associations, or chambers of commerce to apply FNLC to the soft project ideas they prepare. Consequently, the conventional system (now termed the “reimbursement cost” model) will continue to be the standard in IPA grant programmes.

In the 2025-updated version of PRAG, there are two main types of financing: reimbursement of costs and financing not linked to costs (FNLC). It is also possible to combine the two approaches in a hybrid model. The applicable financing modality will be indicated in the guidelines of the relevant call for proposals.

The reimbursement of costs model is the traditional method. Under this approach, the applicant incurs eligible expenses, keeps all relevant financial documentation (such as invoices and timesheets), and submits them to the EU for reimbursement. Under the reimbursement cost model, grant payments are implemented within the framework of three distinct options. Option one applies to projects with a total duration of 12 months or less, or a total grant amount not exceeding €100,000. In this case, 80% of the grant is disbursed upfront as pre-financing, while the remaining balance is paid at the end of the project. Option two is applicable to projects that last longer than 12 months and receive grants exceeding €100,000. Here, the initial payment corresponds to the entire budget allocated for the first reporting period. Subsequent payments can only be made if at least 70% of the previous payment has been spent and reported. In this option, pre-financing cannot exceed 90% of the total grant amount. Option three refers to a single lump-sum payment, made either before or after the project activities. The applicable option is always specified clearly in the grant guidelines of the call.

The FNLC model, on the other hand, is a results-based financing method (EC, 2022a). In this case, payments are not based on actual expenditure, but rather on the achievement of specific, pre-agreed outputs or outcomes. For instance, the EU may agree to pay €10,000 for each training workshop delivered to at least 40 participants.

The FNCL model was developed by the European Commission to offer a more flexible, results-oriented grant mechanism with a reduced administrative burden, particularly in the field of development aid (ePRAG, 2025b). Instead of reimbursing eligible expenditure, the model hinges on paying beneficiaries once predefined, measurable results have been achieved.

FNLC is mainly chosen for sectors where outputs are clear and impacts can be quantified. Typical examples include installing 5,000 heat meters in residential buildings, constructing 23 schools in a country, training 300 people, or certifying 600 firefighters – projects whose activities are not diversified. Because the result indicators are explicit, progress can be directly observed and verified by an independent third party.

The main benefit of FNLC is that implementing bodies can devote their time to project management and delivering outputs rather than compiling supporting cost documents. Lower administrative workload boosts efficiency for both beneficiaries and auditors, which will come in handy during disaster-response or humanitarian aid.

Although the overall payment architecture of FNLC (three options, €100 000/12-month thresholds, the 70% spending rule, the 90% pre-financing ceiling and a final balance payment) appears to be similar to the reimbursement-cost model, the two schemes diverge in two fundamental respects. Firstly, the rationale for payments differs. In the reimbursement model, grant disbursements are based on documented actual expenditure such as invoices, payroll records or procurement files. Under FNLC, however, payments are triggered by the indicator values achieved through project activities. Instead of cost documentation, beneficiaries must provide evidence that the agreed outputs and outcomes have been reached, using the data sources identified in the logical-framework matrix. Secondly, the audit approach changes. While the reimbursement model relies on financial audits, FNLC model places performance audits at the forefront. Consequently, FNLC demands a strong monitoring system, clearly defined indicators and reliable verification processes to validate results.

In the case of a combination model, both methods are used together. For example, in a project with a total eligible budget of €600,000, the applicant may request a total EU contribution of €480,000 (80% of the total budget). Of this, €300,000 (50%) could be requested through reimbursement of costs, and €180,000 (30%) through FNLC based on performance indicators, such as the number of completed trainings or verified outputs. In the hybrid system, while the overall payment structure remains the same, the simultaneous and coordinated application of reimbursement and FNLC rules is required. As such, the hybrid model demands a proposal with higher administrative capacity, careful indicator planning, and a clearly separated budget. At project closure, the final grant amount is calculated separately for each component: achieved indicators form the basis for the FNLC part, while eligible and documented expenditures are used for the reimbursement part. Throughout implementation, dual reporting lines and audit systems must be in place to ensure proper tracking and verification.

Important Note – 2

<i>FNLC is unlikely to apply to soft projects with diverse components. It appears to be tailored for DG INTPA-led actions, particularly in humanitarian or crisis contexts.</i>

4.3. Other Changes in the Grants

The PRAG 2025 guide introduces several updates concerning grants. These revisions impact the expectations of applicants regarding the process, the content of application files, and the assessment methods of contracting authorities.

The definition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has been clarified in accordance with the updated Financial Regulation provisions, clearly outlining the criteria for qualifying as an NGO. The valuation method for volunteer work has been detailed, making the role of volunteer contributions in projects more transparent. Furthermore, the calculation of the “non-profit” status in budget preparation has been simplified to reduce the administrative burden on applicants. A new concept of “very low value grants” has also been introduced, increasing financing opportunities for small-scale projects with potentially high impact.

Simplifications have also been made regarding Simplified Cost Options (SCOs). Only two types are now permitted: those determined and pre-authorised by the contracting authority before the launch of the award procedure, and single lump sums. All previous result-based SCOs and related guidelines formerly in Annex K have been withdrawn. These changes aim to facilitate the transition to the e-grants system, streamline document control, and standardise verification procedures.

In indirect cost calculation, expenses related to volunteer work, project office costs, and land acquisition are now excluded, if not specifically allowed in the *CfP*. According to the European Commission, this change simplifies reporting and makes the indirect cost rate more predictable.

In the new system, the sequence and timing of required applicant declarations have been reorganised. The traditional three-step evaluation process has been reduced by merging steps two and three. Eligibility checks are now conducted during the *full application* phase, based on the Declaration on Honour. Evaluation reports and notification letters have been consolidated, and redundant documents eliminated. Furthermore, the award notice (previously mandatory) has been removed, as it is not required under the Financial Regulation.

Reporting obligations have also been revised. Both narrative and financial reports are simplified to enable quicker clearance of pre-financing. The detailed breakdown of expenditure must now be submitted with the financial report instead of the payment request. This allows expenses and advance payments to be reviewed in a single document. Additionally, any financial support to third parties exceeding €60,000 must now be reported as a specific event.

Asset transfer obligations have been updated as well. Even for purchases below €5,000, appropriate control documents must be retained by the beneficiary. A new clause requires that transferred assets continue to be used in compliance with EU values.

Communication and visibility rules have also been revised. Unless explicitly requested by the European Commission, applicants may no longer include a communication component (such as budget lines, staff, or activities) in their applications. This simultaneously applies to all communication strategies, plans, and actions.

Changes in bank account details now require a formal contract amendment, as bank account information is part of the special conditions of the contract. As part of digitalisation, calls for proposals are now published exclusively on the F&T Portal, phasing out physical notices and email announcements. Also, the notion of sensitive contracts has been clarified. For grants involving sensitive information, additional clauses are introduced in the special conditions and expenditure verification reports.

CHAPTER 5: PROJECT, MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

5.1. The Evolution of the Project Concept

The term project originates from the Latin word “proiectus”, meaning “something thrown forward.” It is derived from the verbs *pro* (forward) and *iacere* (to throw) (Harper, 2025). In this context, a project originally referred to an idea or action planned for the future but not yet realised. During the Middle Ages, the concept was mainly used in military engineering and architecture. For instance, drawings and plans for constructing castles or city walls were referred to as “projects.”

In the Islamic Golden Age, the idea of a “concept project” saw widespread use. A notable example is the 1206 publication by polymath Al-Jazari, titled *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices* (Kitab fi ma’rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya), which compiled a series of theoretical or conceptual projects. His work is considered one of the most significant examples of early conceptual engineering. Leonardo da Vinci was significantly inspired by Al-Jazari (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025b) and helped popularise the idea of the “concept project” in 15th and 16th-century Europe through his brilliant, visionary drawings. The Renaissance era marked a turning point in the evolution of the project concept in Europe, where artists, inventors, and scholars began producing elaborate plans for unbuilt machines and architectural structures.

By the 17th century, the term project became commonly associated with state planning and reform initiatives. In France and England, public policies, social reform proposals, and economic strategies were all termed as projects. Daniel Defoe’s (1697) work titled *An Essay Upon Projects* is regarded as one of the earliest systematic studies in the context of social reform, covering topics such as tax systems, insurance, and women’s education.

With the Industrial Revolution (late 18th to early 19th century), the project concept expanded rapidly into engineering, transportation, and infrastructure. Projects such as railway construction, bridge building, and large factory developments required complex planning, laying the foundation for a product-focused project management discipline.

In the 20th century, especially after World War II, the concept of projects became institutionalised and methodological. Tools like PERT (Program Evaluation Review Technique) and CPM (Critical Path Method), developed in the 1950s in the United States, defined project management as a professional field. A landmark in this transition was the Apollo Project, which aimed to land a human on the Moon. NASA engineers tried to minimise errors by breaking the project down into traceable, manageable units, conducting continuous monitoring and risk analysis, and developing contingency plans – principles that ensured the project’s success.

Today, the term project is used in various domains, including physical production, social services, software development, cultural events, and policy design. This historical development shows that the concept of a project has evolved from an idea to a plan, from a plan to implementation, and ultimately to institutional management.

5.2. What is a Project?

Since this Manual integrates the development of proposals under the IPA framework with the PM² methodology, the general introduction to the definitions of project, project management, and project

environment will be given based on the explanations provided in the PM² Methodology Guide (PM², pp. 5–9).

A project is a temporary organisational structure established to produce a unique product or service within a specific timeframe. Its temporary nature indicates that a project has a defined start and end date, which distinguishes it from ongoing and repetitive business processes. The outputs of projects are unique and they may be a tangible product (e.g., a new software application) or a service (e.g., measurable capacity development). Even if similar work has been done before, each project carries its own distinctiveness based on its context, needs, and conditions. For instance, a project may present content similar to a previously held training programme, but the participant profile, implementation procedure, or outcomes will always differ.

A project is not completed at the idea stage; its scope is clearly defined, it is planned in detail, and implemented within defined constraints such as time and budget. These constraints may arise from external factors (e.g., deadlines or budget ceilings imposed by a funding body) or internal institutional priorities. The institutional environment in which the project is carried out also directly affects the process. Factors such as approach to risk, technical capacity, availability of human resources, and existing workload can have a direct impact on project performance. Therefore, a project is about delivering an output, but it also represents a complex management process, requiring detailed planning, effective implementation, and continuous monitoring for success.

Projects fundamentally differ from an organisation's daily and routine operations. In this regard, projects are sets of special activities planned to achieve a specific goal within a limited timeframe. While daily operations are generally carried out with routine and standard procedures, projects aim to produce specific products within a given time frame. Hence, the scope of every project is defined at the outset. The project scope sets out the work to be done, the activities to be carried out, and the deliverables to be achieved. This definition seeds the overall process during the project and helps the team staying focused while setting and respecting boundaries

Carrying out a project requires the use of valuable resources of an organisation such as time, budget, and human capital. For this reason, a business case is developed at the beginning of each project, explaining why the project is being undertaken. The benefits the project provides to the organisation and the needs it addresses are outlined at this stage, as the request for a budget will come with many questions.

Projects are multi-stakeholder structures. Every project has direct and indirect stakeholders such as beneficiaries, supporting institutions, implementing partners, and the project team. Therefore, all stakeholders are identified at the beginning of the project and their roles are defined. At the same time, a core team is established to oversee project implementation and to designate individuals responsible for both major and minor decisions. This is especially important in multi-stakeholder projects where various parties share authority. The team typically includes project manager, technical experts, and administrative personnel. While day-to-day work generally proceeds with established calendars and procedures, projects require specially developed timelines, activity plans, and resource plans. These plans detail when, how, where and by whom the project will be carried out. The more detailed and realistic the planning phase, the fewer problems will be encountered during implementation.

Projects are open to unpredictable developments, therefore, regularly monitored and evaluated. Daily progress, work completed, emerging issues, and risks are reported, and real-time adjustments are made when necessary. Quality control, time management, and budget tracking gain importance during this

phase. Moreover, risk analyses carried out at the start of the project enable the system to be better prepared for potential disruptions.

Whereas routine work continues in a constant flow, projects have a clearly defined end point. At this stage, project outputs (such as a training programme, report, or digital platform) are delivered to beneficiaries and the project is administratively closed. During closure, the conformity of outputs with pre-defined standards is checked, gaps are filled, and final reports are prepared. This stage also serves as a learning opportunity. The experiences gained during the project are documented and contribute to future projects. In this way, projects achieve their goals, build institutional memory and serve as a tool for capacity development.

Projects are structured and dynamic processes designed to create value within defined objectives and limited resources. Each project contributes to institutional growth by offering tangible results and learning opportunities.

5.3. Why Do We Undertake Projects?

Projects are tools through which institutions and societies innovate, manage change, and generate value. The core motivation for launching a project lies in the desire to improve upon the current state and to take concrete steps toward targeted goals. These goals may include gaining competitive advantage by developing a new product, improving existing processes to increase efficiency, or complying with new legal requirements. Project management helps convert ideas into reality by guiding resources with discipline. This enables organisations to implement large-scale changes without disrupting their operational cycle.

When a client requests a new product or service, a project may be initiated to meet that demand. A notable example is that in 2005, when Apple approached Corning for a tough, thin glass for the first iPhone (Murphy, 2019). This client request revived Corning's dormant Chemcor technology, resulting in the creation of Gorilla Glass by the 2007 launch. Apple's clear demands shaped the product, which later became a smartphone industry standard.

Projects may also be initiated to seize emerging market opportunities. As electric bikes gained popularity, Vélib Métropole launched a project to expand its fleet and infrastructure in Paris (Velib Metropole, 2025). This initiative aimed to capture growing demand for e-mobility and strengthen the brand's position as a leader in France. The project involved deploying thousands of e-bikes, upgrading docking stations, integrating with public transport, and launching promotional campaigns. With strategic planning and public support, the project boosted ridership and visibility.

Regulatory changes or internal institutional needs can also trigger project initiation. For example, following the enactment of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the City of London Corporation launched a data privacy compliance project (City of London Corporation, 2018). With the project, the City of London developed a comprehensive data inventory, updated storage and handling procedures, implemented technical security measures, and delivered GDPR training to staff to reach full legal compliance.

If an audit report identifies areas for improvement, projects may be initiated to address the findings. After a comprehensive audit revealed inefficiencies and transparency issues in its procurement system, the City University of New York (CUNY) launched the ERI initiative to overhaul procurement processes (Institute for Strategic Leadership Group, 2025). The project included automation, improved

internal controls, and the adoption of best practices across the institution. As a result, CUNY enhanced compliance and reduced manual errors. The increased transparency also improved supplier trust and relationships, as well as helping to lower costs.

Competitive moves can also trigger rapid project responses. When Airbus launched its A380 superjumbo aircraft (aimed at long-haul air travel with unmatched passenger capacity), Boeing responded by initiating the 787 Dreamliner project (Zenios & Makinen, 2018). Instead of matching size, Boeing focused on efficiency, launching a project centred on lightweight composite materials, improved fuel economy, and passenger comfort. The Dreamliner aimed to meet airlines' evolving demands for lower operating costs and point-to-point connectivity. Developed under intense time and market pressure, the 787-project required fast decision-making and global coordination.

New technologies also justify projects. For instance, Başarsoft launched a solid waste collection system for municipalities using GIS and RFID technologies (eBelediye, 2017). Each garbage container was tagged and mapped on a digital platform, enabling route optimisation for waste collection trucks. The ContainX software received real-time data from trucks via GPS and RFID readers, reducing the average route from 110 km to 81 km and achieving a 25% savings in fuel and time.

Projects are also used in integration processes such as mergers or organisational restructuring. A prime example is the 2004 merger between Air France and KLM (Aviation Strategy, 2006). To align two national carriers with distinct systems and corporate cultures, a comprehensive integration project was launched. Project teams managed cultural alignment and operational synergies, with clear governance structures overseeing implementation. The project resulted in significant cost savings and efficiency gains, with projected synergies exceeding €600 million.

Modernisation of existing processes can also be a valid project rationale. For instance, The City of Midland significantly improved its permitting and inspection processes through digital transformation (Dias, 2025). Permit approval times dropped from 7.2 to 1.6 days, while issuance times fell from 11.9 to 7.3 days. Single-family home permits increased by 27%, and inspections rose by 27% without hiring new staff.

Similarly, relocating to a new facility or expanding existing ones may also trigger a project. In 2019, Turkish Airlines launched the world's largest aviation logistics operation, moving over 10,000 items and 47,300 tons of equipment from Atatürk Airport to the new Istanbul Airport within 45 hours (Sahin, 2019).

Projects may also be initiated to raise awareness. In June 2024, The Walk Productions launched The Herds, a 20,000 km puppet journey from Africa to Europe, symbolising animals fleeing climate change (Rantala, 2024). Inspired by Little Amal, the climate-awareness project features life-size puppets and engages local communities in each city along the route. The project intended to blend art, activism, and civic participation.

When a project is launched to provide a proof-of-concept, the goal is to test whether a specific idea actually works on a small scale. A well-known example of proof-of-concept projects is the television show *MythBusters*. In each episode, the hosts conducted small-scale experiments to test the validity of popular myths or urban legends. These mini-projects aimed to determine whether a concept could actually work in practice by offering scientific insight.

As described above, projects may be initiated for a wide range of reasons, but at their core, they aim to generate value on environmental, societal, institutional, or individual levels. Each project is a concrete step to improve a current condition, meet a need, or seize an opportunity.

5.4. Project Management

Project management is the discipline of working toward defined objectives within limited time, constrained resources, and specified quality standards. The combined activities of planning, organising, procuring resources, monitoring and directing ensure that a project reaches its goals efficiently and effectively. Nevertheless, not every project should be managed with an identical system; the approach must always be adapted to the project and its content. The European Commission's PM² methodology highlights this flexibility. A Project Manager eliminates all processes that add no value and applies only those tools and techniques that are truly necessary. In this way, every step (from documentation to reporting) is purified from unnecessary bureaucratic burden and becomes a direct generator of value.

The purification process does not imply the absence of documentation. Project documentation indeed represents the administrative pillar of project management and carries the project's institutional memory from concept to closure. On the one hand, it forces vague ideas to be expressed in concrete terms; on the other, it formalises the scope so that stakeholder expectations can be clearly understood. A well-prepared scope statement sets out work packages and responsibilities, ensuring no one is left asking, "Why are we doing this?" Documentation also facilitates communication. During monitoring and control, these documents serve as the reference point for measuring performance, and during audits, they function as formal evidence.

One of the most important actors in keeping project management focused on value is the Project Support Office (PSO). This office is a back-office force that provides solutions for often hidden needs of the project teams. In some organisations PSO assumes only simple duties such as gathering reports and tracking schedules, whereas in more mature organisations it can play strategic roles such including methodology adaptation and resource optimisation. The PSO's greatest benefit is freeing project managers from administrative burdens, allowing them to concentrate on activities or decisions that generate high value.

For project management to generate institutional value within multi-structures, it is not enough to merely manage individual projects effectively. The success also depends on how these projects are grouped and coordinated at a strategic level. At this point, two key management approaches come into play: programme management and portfolio management. Programme management brings together interrelated projects around common objectives, while portfolio management prioritises and directs independent projects and programmes based on their contribution to institutional strategy.

Programme management is a high-level management discipline that coordinates multiple projects around shared strategic goals. Projects under the same programme are interdependent, and the benefits they deliver together are greater than those achievable by projects undertaken separately. For example, viewed from the perspective of the European Union, the "Climate Adaptation Grant Programme" could fund many individual projects, yet generate a large collective impact once all funded projects advance toward a common objective. A Programme Manager does not intervene directly in project deliverables; rather, the role is strategic – such as overseeing schedules, resource sharing, and benefit integration. In the same way, Contracting Authorities set parameters for general frameworks rather

than dictating project outputs. Thus, synergies emerge between projects and the organisational change targeted by the programme is achieved in a more holistic manner.

Portfolio management, on the other hand, oversees all of an organisation's projects and programmes from a high-level perspective. The primary aim at portfolio level is to rank investments according to strategic priorities and distribute resources evenly. The IPA Windows in IPA countries provide an example of portfolio management. Each Window encompasses many different programmes, projects, and initiatives that are not necessarily interdependent. What matters is what each initiative contributes to the broader objectives of the relevant Window. Decision-makers at this level determine which projects receive funding, which are postponed, and which are cancelled. In doing so, they direct limited capital toward the initiatives that promise the greatest strategic return.

Another point that must be emphasised in project management is the relationship between projects and operations. Projects are temporary; operations are continuous. In practice, however, the two often overlap. For instance, a municipality's transition to an e-permit system begins as a project, but once the transition is complete, the effort must move from the project phase into an operational phase. The service then becomes routine, and part of daily practice.

5.5. Project Organisation

Project organisation refers to the way in which projects are structured within an institution. The organisational structure of implementing institutions directly influences how projects are managed. The project manager's level of authority and access to resources are closely linked to the organisational setup. Although it is often assumed that all project managers work under similar job descriptions and conditions, in reality, various organisational models and different operational methods are experienced. These models define the project's position within the institution, the way it is prioritised, and the governance structure surrounding it. Institutions typically select the model that best fits their operations or adopt a hybrid structure tailored to their needs. Based on the institutional needs, project organisations are generally categorised as functional, project-based, or matrix structures.

In a functional organisational structure, projects are integrated into the institution's daily operations. Project team members are temporarily assigned from different departments and remain under the responsibility of their respective units. The project manager usually has limited authority and must collaborate with senior management for major decisions. In this structure, projects are not prioritised to the same extent as regular operations, and project activities may occasionally be disrupted. This model is commonly observed in public institutions, where each department appoints a representative for a specific project, but progress often depends on the extraordinary effort of the project manager or coordinator.

The projectised organisational structure is the exact opposite of the functional model. In this setup, the institution's permanent structure is minimal, and all work revolves around temporary projects. Project teams are formed solely to achieve specific project objectives and, upon completion, members are either reassigned to new projects or returned to a central resource pool. In this structure, project managers hold significant authority and decision-making power. Since projects are the primary focus, resources and scheduling are managed more efficiently. This structure is especially common in development agencies operating in foreign countries. These agencies often conduct nearly all their activities through projects in the countries where they are based. If there is no project or budget, there will be no work.

Matrix structures are a blend of functional and projectised organisations. In this model, temporary project teams are formed while maintaining continuity in the institution's operational workflow. The project manager is authorised to access the resources needed for project execution and is supported by governance committees. Alongside the Project Manager, a Business Manager also plays an active role in the decision-making process. Matrix structures are classified into weak, balanced, and strong matrix models based on how authority is distributed. In strong matrix structures, the project manager has more authority, whereas in weak matrices, functional managers exert greater influence. An example to this model is the United Nations agencies, which maintain continuous engagement with both governmental and non-governmental organisations in their host countries. At the same time, funded projects constitute a critical component of UN operations and serve as key instruments for delivering targeted support. In the example of UN agencies, sector managers (full-time employees) are assigned to oversee specific sectors, and all projects within a given sector are coordinated under their management. However, each project also has its own dedicated project manager. In this model, the balance of authority leans slightly toward the sector manager. While the project manager is responsible for the overall management of that specific project, they are expected to follow the directives of the sector manager on key matters.

CHAPTER 6: CALL FOR PROPOSAL

6.1. What is a Call for Proposals?

A Guidelines for Grant Applicants (Call for Proposals) is a document used to collect project proposals under a programme or funding source. Within the scope of the *guideline*, project ideas or initiatives are gathered from applicants based on clearly pre-defined objectives. So, the *guideline* document is structured in a way to organise incoming applications.

In many EU project applications, it is common to see proposals eliminated at the initial stage. This often results from failing to read the *guideline* properly, or not reading it at all. Even at the *concept note* stage, developing, writing, and defending a project idea takes time. Therefore, being rejected due to simple errors means wasted effort. Moreover, the *guideline* contains many important details that are actually required at the *concept note* stage. A thorough and accurate reading of the guide will provide valuable input for an effective defence of the proposed action.

Important Note – 3
<i>The guide serves as a lighthouse, helping shape your existing idea into a form that aligns with the priorities and requirements of the announced grant.</i>

Chapter 6 focuses on the “Guidelines for Grant Applicants (E3a)” document under the PRAG guide (ePRAG, 2025d). The document includes essential information such as the purpose of the call, priorities, scope, eligibility criteria, application process, available funding, and expected outcomes. Applicants are required to submit detailed project proposals as part of the process. The unified model of PRAG promotes transparent competition while maintaining consistency across applications.

The PRAG template Guidelines for Grant Applicants is structured into three main sections: Programme, Rules for This Call for Proposals, and Annexes.

6.2. The Programme

Programmes are long-term planning and implementation processes serving an organisation’s strategic vision. Therefore, *guidelines* act as tools to implement small-scale projects that contribute to the programme’s overarching objectives. Projects deliver specific outputs and impacts that directly enhance the programme’s success, supporting the progress through a holistic approach.

“A programme is a set of related projects and activities managed in a coordinated way to achieve strategic objectives and benefits that could not be obtained if they were managed individually. The projects within a programme all contribute to the common programme goals and are interdependent.” (PM², p. 7)

The *guideline* includes information about the overarching programme under which the funding is provided. Within the EU financing methodology, all projects are funded as part of a related program. While individual projects aim to achieve their specific goals, they collectively contribute to the broader objectives of the overarching program. Therefore, as previously mentioned, all projects must align with the relevant program’s goals.

From the Field – 1

There is a common misperception among applicants that projects submitted under IPA programs are evaluated by European experts in Brussels. As previously explained, grants are typically provided under a large programme where a specific institution is the main beneficiary. Project proposals are generally evaluated by representatives of the main beneficiary institution or independent evaluators from the beneficiary country.

6.2.1. Background

The background section within the *guideline* explains the scope of the call. This sub-section provides historical context, detailing why and how the call was created, referencing strategic or policy documents, and outlining priority issues. This section discusses the subject's background and context within the framework of current needs and opportunities; also including information on how the call contributes to targeted policies or strategies.

Important Note – 4

The section also provides guidance for concept note development by addressing the following questions in the concept note:

- *State clearly the specific pre-project situation in the target country/countries, region(s) and/or sectors (include quantified data analysis where possible).*
- *Refer to any significant plans undertaken at national, regional and/or local level relevant to the action and describe how the action will relate to such plans.*
- *Where the action is part of a larger programme, clearly explain how it fits or is coordinated with that programme or any other planned project. Specify the potential synergies with other initiatives, in particular by the European Commission.*
- *Explain the complementarity with other initiatives supported by the EU and by other donors (Member States & others).*

Reading the Background would allow potential applicants to understand why the call was issued, the programme under which it is funded, and how their projects should align with the main programme. Applicants can use this information to tailor their proposals to be on the right track. The background section is often linked to national or international plans, reports, or strategic documents, emphasising the call's focus on addressing specific problems and seeking solutions. It also provides key information for the "policy alignment" section of the *concept note*, which carries significant weight during evaluation.

6.2.2. Objectives of the Programme and Priority Issues

The "Objectives of the Programme and Priority Issues" sub-section in the *guideline* gives a definition of the purpose, scope, and focus areas; meaning that it outlines the global objective, specific objective and the priorities of the Call.

Global objectives are long-term strategic goals aimed at addressing large-scale issues or needs while contributing to broader policies or strategies. Specific objectives focus on concrete and measurable outcomes that support the general objectives. They clarify the areas or activities projects should

address and explain how projects aim to achieve these goals. Priorities, on the other hand, define the areas or themes projects should target within the scope of the call. Together, these elements outline the specific types of activities which are expected to receive support. The information provided in this sub-section assists applicants to align their proposals with the strategic objectives of the call.

Important Note – 5
<p><i>The section also provides guidance for concept note development by addressing the following questions within the concept note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Describe the relevance of the action to the objective(s) and priority(ies) of the call for proposals.</i> • <i>Describe which of the expected results referred to in the guidelines for applicants will be addressed.</i>

6.2.3. Financial Allocation Provided by the Contracting Authority

This sub-section details the total budget allocated under the call for proposals and the methods of budget allocation. While contracting authorities typically reserve the right not to allocate the entire budget, unused funds are rarely returned by candidate countries, meaning the total budget is usually distributed among grant beneficiaries.

The section also specifies the minimum and maximum grant amounts available for each project. These limits depend on the scale and scope of the projects and provide applicants with guidance for budget planning. The financial eligibility and requirements are clarified, including the minimum and maximum percentages of eligible costs to be covered by the grant.

For example, the *guideline* for a specific call might specify the following grant ranges.

- Minimum grant amount: €70,000
- Maximum grant amount: €120,000

Similarly, the *guideline* might define the following percentages for total eligible costs.

- Minimum percentage of eligible costs covered: 50%
- Maximum percentage of eligible costs covered: 90%

If the total project budget is €100,000, the EU contribution would range from a minimum of €50,000 (50%) to a maximum of €90,000 (90%). The remaining percentage must be funded by the applicant from other sources.

When the above sample ranges are taken as an example, the lowest project budget that an applicant can propose would be approximately €77,778, which corresponds to a grant amount of €70,000 at a 90% co-financing rate. On the other hand, the highest possible project budget would be €240,000, based on the maximum grant amount of €120,000 covered at a 50% co-financing rate. It is important to note that the 90% rate does not mean 90% of €120,000. Rather, it indicates that up to 90% of the total eligible project budget can be covered by the grant. Therefore, calculations should be based on the total project budget, not the grant amount.

To maximise the EU contribution within the given framework, the most advantageous option would be to design a project with a total eligible budget of €133,333. At a 90% co-financing rate, this would yield the maximum allowable grant amount of €120,000. This model would create an opportunity for the applicant to receive the highest possible funding while contributing the minimum required co-financing amount of €13,333.

6.3. Rules for The Call for Proposals

This section of the *guideline* explains the rules covering the submission, selection, and implementation of activities to be funded under the relevant call for proposals. These rules are prepared according to the requirements of that specific call and cover all stages from the application process to project implementation. Rules detail how applicants should prepare their proposals, eligibility criteria, evaluation processes, and obligations related to project implementation.

6.3.1. Eligibility Criteria

The Eligibility Criteria section of the *guideline* should be carefully read with its footnotes and explanatory paragraphs at the end of the section. Understanding the criteria and preparing the application accordingly is crucial for the technical eligibility phase.

Understanding the key parties involved in an IPA-funded grant project is essential for determining each actor's role. The Eligibility Criteria section outlines six main parties that may take part in the design and implementation of a project.

- **Lead Applicant:** The main entity submitting the proposal, responsible for project design and implementation. Must meet all eligibility criteria and will act as coordinator if the grant is awarded.
- **Co-applicant(s):** Organisations jointly designing and implementing the project with the lead applicant. Must meet all eligibility criteria and will become co-beneficiaries upon grant approval.
- **Affiliated Entities:** Entities with a legal or structural link to the lead or co-applicant, such as subsidiaries or network members. They participate in project delivery but they are not direct grant beneficiaries.
- **Associates:** Organisations or individuals contributing to the project without receiving grant funding (except travel/per diem). They must be listed in the application but they are not subject to eligibility checks.
- **Contractors:** External suppliers hired by beneficiaries or affiliates to deliver specific project components via procurement. They cannot be applicants or associates and must follow procurement rules.
- **Recipients of Financial Support:** Third parties receiving funds distributed by the beneficiaries or affiliated entities. They are not formal project partners and are governed by special grant rules, if allowed by the call.

First, the applying organisations (lead applicant and co-applicant) should ensure that they meet the criteria under the “eligibility of applicants” heading. These criteria typically include the legal status of the organisation (e.g., civil society organisation, public sector body), geographic location, and specific qualifications required of the applicant. If affiliated entities are to be included in the project, they should have a legal or equity-based structural link with the applicant. This legal link must exist before the call for proposals and continue after the project is completed. Compliance with the requirements stated in the guidelines will be assessed during the initial evaluation. Only applications that pass the technical eligibility phase proceed to the *concept note* evaluation stage.

From the Field – 2
<i>In a project application, the lead applicant was a municipality and the co-applicant a municipal union. Both were listed as eligible entities in the guidelines, so the pairing raised no initial concerns. However, a clause later in the application form stated that “persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant” could not participate. Since the municipality was a member of the Union—which had authority to represent its members externally—the evaluation committee questioned whether “representation power” referred strictly to legal representation or also included the Union’s role on behalf of its members. As the guidelines advise, a clarification request should be submitted to the Contracting Authority through official channels in such ambiguous cases. This experience underlines the need to review not only the bullet-points under the “eligibility of applicants” but also other information given in the guideline.</i>

Right after defining the parties involved, the *guideline* states that an action consists of a set of activities. It then outlines the below headings which vary depending on the specific nature of each call and Programme.

- Duration: The minimum and maximum number of months within which the action can be implemented.
- Sectors or themes: The predefined thematic or sectoral areas that the action’s activities must correspond to.
- Location: The eligible countries or regions where the action must be carried out.

The following “types of actions” section in the *guidelines* summaries the types of projects that can and cannot be financed. Examples of eligible actions are provided by the programme leader in line with the program’s objectives and are intended to guide applicants. These examples should not be considered as the strict frame. Projects with similar contexts and aims, even if not explicitly listed, may also be considered eligible.

On the other hand, the PRAG template (ePRAG, 2025d, p.10) explicitly defines certain types of actions that are ineligible for funding. These include projects concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, and congresses; projects focused solely or primarily on individual scholarships for studies or training courses; and actions or measures that could result in human rights violations or cause significant adverse effects on the environment or climate. In addition, the lead institution managing the program has the option to list other types of actions ineligible in the guideline, should they think the topics are not aligned with the program’s priorities or policy objectives.

From the Field – 3

A grant call aimed to finance climate and environment-focused projects by local authorities. During this period, some municipalities were in the process of preparing Local Economic Development (LED) plans and submitted project proposals designed with the LED plan as the main output. However, the “ineligible actions” section of the guidelines explicitly listed the preparation of LED plans. This was because the Contracting Authority was aware that another lead institution was already running a separate funding program specifically dedicated to supporting such plans and wanted to avoid overlap between the two schemes. Therefore, the Contracting Authority requested that the lead institution managing the current call exclude projects focused on LED plan preparation from the scope. As a result, several municipal applications were deemed ineligible.

The heading on “financial support to third parties” may appear in one of three forms: “Applicants may,” “Applicants shall,” or “Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties.” Depending on the phrasing used, the guideline will outline the applicable framework and conditions for such support. Detailed guidance on this topic will be provided in the later chapters of the *Manual*.

The next section titled “Visibility,” explains how EU support should be publicly acknowledged in the action. All actions receiving EU funding are expected to include the EU emblem and funding statement in a visible and appropriate way. However, in exceptional cases such as security risks or political sensitivity, reduced visibility may be negotiated during the implementation.

The section titled “Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities” describes the restrictions on how many proposals or grants a single organisation may participate in under the same call. These rules are typically introduced to prevent monopolisation and if used, prevents the same entity from stretching its capacity across multiple applications. In certain cases, especially when the Contracting Authority’s or Lead Institution’s workload is high, the guideline generally restricts each lead and co-applicant to a single proposal, reducing overall application volume and easing the evaluation process.

From the Field – 4

In a town twinning grant call, two different lead municipalities submitted applications with the same co-applicant municipality. However, the guideline clearly stated: “A co-applicant/affiliated entity may not be awarded more than 1 grant(s) under this call for proposals.” During the evaluation phase, both projects received equal scores and passed the threshold. Due to this provision, the Contracting Authority and the Evaluation Committee consulted the co-applicant to decide which project to proceed with. As a result, the lead applicants had no opportunity to challenge or influence the final decision.

In another example, 18 institutions from 18 different European countries submitted a joint application. But, one organisation (due to a lack of internal coordination between two departments) also became a co-applicant in another project through a separate unit. The call’s guideline included the clause: “A co-applicant/affiliated entity may not be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in more than 1 application(s) under this call for proposals.” Consequently, the entire application was declared ineligible, nullifying six months of preparation. This mistake not only caused a major setback for the consortium but also significantly damaged the reputation of the institution at fault.

In the ePRAG guideline template, there are three options listed under the “Form of the Grant” section. As explained in Chapter 4.2, the grant may take the form of FNL, Reimbursement, or a combination

of both. However, since this *Manual* primarily focuses on soft projects that operate with simplified cost options under the reimbursement model, applicants are most likely to encounter this option in the *guidelines*.

In the reimbursement system, grants may be awarded based on actual costs and/or simplified cost options, depending on what the call guidelines allow. In most cases (especially for soft projects) simplified cost options are permitted. When permitted, the guidelines will indicate one of two possible approaches. Option 1 refers to simplified cost amounts that are predetermined by the Contracting Authority and applied uniformly by all applicants. This method is less common in soft projects, as it offers limited flexibility. For example, a guideline may recognise voluntary work as eligible co-financing and provide a fixed rate table for valuing such contributions. In another case, it may set daily allowance rates for travel by listing amounts per country. When all budget items are set in advance, as in the examples above, through fixed rates provided by the contracting authority, this is referred to as “predefined simplified cost options.” While useful in some contexts, this approach is rarely applied in soft projects in IPA countries.

Option 2, on the other hand, is more frequently used. Applicants under this option, propose a single lump sum that covers all eligible project costs. The single lump sum budget is composed of two elements: unit costs and lump sums. Unit costs refer to fixed amounts per measurable unit, such as per brochure printed, per flight purchased or per month paid. Lump sums represent a total amount for an activity or output, such as organising a workshop or producing a video series.

Form of the Grant section of the *guideline* also introduces three important items: contingency reserve, eligible indirect costs, and contributions in kind. However, detailed explanations of these elements will be provided under the “Budget” heading in the Full Application Chapter of this *Manual*.

When preparing the project with its activities, it is essential to ensure that only eligible costs are included. Expenses not listed under the eligible cost categories in the *guideline* will not be covered by the grant. Ineligible costs are also outlined in the same section of the *guideline* and refer to any expenses that do not comply with the contractual conditions. These include, among others, debt-related charges, provisions for future liabilities, double-funded costs, land purchases (unless directly linked to the action and transferred accordingly), currency exchange losses, and in-kind contributions (excluding volunteer work). Reviewing this list carefully during proposal development would give applicants an opportunity to conduct a sound self-assessment, ensuring that all planned expenditures meet eligibility requirements.

Ethical rules and compliance requirements are also detailed under this section. The *guideline* identifies that applicant must avoid conflicts of interest, comply with environmental legislation, and respect human rights. Section also states that association with corruption can lead to the rejection of the proposal or cancellation of project funding.

During preparation, it is highly advised that all criteria must be carefully reviewed including the footnotes, and all necessary documents must be submitted without error. Failure to meet the eligibility requirements at any stage might result in the rejection of the application.

Important Note – 6

The section also provides guidance for concept note development by addressing the following question within the concept note:

- *Describe the relevance of the action to any specific subthemes/sectors/areas and any other specific requirements stated in the guidelines for applicants, e.g. local ownership etc.*

6.3.2. How to Apply and the Procedures to Follow

This section of the *guideline* defines the key procedural steps required to ensure a complete and accurate application. Emphasis is placed on avoiding common mistakes, particularly those that may result in failure during the technical evaluation phase. The application should follow the prescribed format exactly, with all required documents submitted as specified. Both the *concept note* and *full application* form are to be filled out in line with the instructions and arranged in the correct order. No additional or unrequested documents should be included at this stage.

Attention is drawn to the importance of submitting the application to the correct postal address, using mail, courier, or hand delivery. Regardless of the method, the application must arrive by the deadline. The checklist attached to the application form is intended to support the applicant in verifying that all components are complete and accurate before submission.

Late submissions are one of the most frequent errors observed. Delays often occur due to coordination issues among co-applicant organisations, with many teams leaving final steps to the last day. To avoid complications, proof of submission (such as a courier receipt or signed delivery confirmation) should be retained. In cases of hand delivery, the signed receipt provided by the Contracting Authority serves as formal evidence.

From the Field – 5

On the final day of a grant application, a staff member delivered the application envelope to the Contracting Authority on behalf of their institution. However, a mandatory statement that was required to be written on the envelope was missing. The official receiving the envelope pointed this out and informed the staff that they could add it manually if they wished. The person delivering the envelope, likely uninvolved in the project, simply responded, "I was only told to bring it." This minor submission error resulted in the application being deemed invalid and the envelope remaining unopened.

The *guideline* also sets clear procedures for communication. Any questions or requests for clarification regarding the call should be submitted through the official channels and within the timeframe defined in the document. Failing to follow these procedures may lead to disqualification.

6.3.3. Evaluation and Selection of Applications

When aiming for success, understanding where the highest value lies is essential. Just like a university student planning their semester (balancing attendance, midterms, presentations, and the final exam based on their grading weight), strategic effort in project text development also matters. Another example is a basketball player choosing when to shoot a three-pointer versus going for a safer two-

point layout, depending on the game’s timing and score. Similarly, in grant applications, knowing which sections carry more weight allows project developers to focus their energy where it counts most and maximise their overall score.

The “Evaluation and selection of applications” section explains how applications will be evaluated, which criteria will be considered, and the steps involved in the selection process. However, the most important part of this section is the evaluation tables provided. These tables also serve as a roadmap for shaping the project description to ensure score maximisation. Just as a university professor informs students about which topics will be emphasised in the final exam, the evaluation criteria outlined in the *guideline* provide project developers with insight into “what to focus on” before drafting their proposals.

Table 4: Concept Note Evaluation Criteria (ePRAG, 2025d)	
<i>Heading</i>	<i>Score</i>
<i>Relevance of the Action</i>	
<i>1.1 Consistency with the objectives of the call</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.2 Relevance to target country/region/sector needs</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.3 Target group and final beneficiaries</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.4 Added-value elements</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Design of the Action</i>	
<i>2.1 Intervention logic</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>2.2 Context analysis</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>2.3 Risks and assumptions</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>2.4 Indicative activities</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>2.5 Cross-cutting issues</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Total Score</i>	<i>50</i>

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings (Table 4 and Table 5), and each subheading is scored on a scale of 1 (very poor), 2 (poor), 3 (adequate), 4 (good) and 5 (very good). As evident from the scoring system, “0” is not used in the evaluation. Thus, even if an applicant does not respond to a specific question, they still receive 1 point. Consequently, the scoring for a poor answer essentially starts at 2. However, since applicants who have developed a project idea usually provide answers to each of the questions to some degree, evaluators tend to work mostly within the 3-5 point range. Nonetheless, in a grant program receiving 400 applications, assessing all proposals within such a narrow score range becomes challenging.

Table 5: Full Application Evaluation Criteria (ePRAG, 2025d)	
Heading	Score
<i>1. Financial and Operational Capacity</i>	
<i>1.1 Project management experience and expertise adequacy</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.2 In-house technical expertise sufficiency</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.3 Capacity for management and budgeting</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.4 Stable and adequate financial resources</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>2. Relevance</i>	
<i>2.1 Score transferred from the Concept Note evaluation</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>3. Design</i>	
<i>3.1 Intervention logic</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>3.2 Logical Framework Matrix</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>3.3 Context analysis</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>4. Implementation</i>	
<i>4.1 Clarity and feasibility of action plan</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>4.2 Monitoring, reporting and evaluation</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>4.3 Project management (technical)</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>5. Sustainability</i>	
<i>5.1 Long-lasting benefits</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>5.2 Multiplier effects</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>5.3 Sustainability</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>6. Budget and Efficiency</i>	
<i>6.1 Budget</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>6.2 Efficiency</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Total Score</i>	<i>100</i>

The scoring system defined by PRAG does not provide clear guidance on what constitutes a 5-point response. This creates uncertainty during the evaluation process. While evaluators can distinguish between weak and adequate responses, determining which answer deserves the highest score often becomes subjective. Therefore, there is no single “correct” answer. Instead, evaluators typically assign a score of 5 to the “best answer” that aligns most closely with the requirements, using it as a benchmark for comparison.

At the *concept note* stage, project proposals that pass technical evaluation are assessed for eligibility and design. This evaluation is conducted on a scale of 50 points. The evaluation process is intense and mentally demanding. Evaluators review project proposals consecutively, in designated workspaces provided by the contracting authority. An experienced evaluator can assess up to 4 *concept notes* or 2 *full applications* in a single day. All project proposals are reviewed independently by evaluators, and the final score for each project is determined by averaging the scores assigned by all evaluators.

During the *full application*, the evaluation process is divided into two main categories: “selection criteria” and “award criteria.” While selection criteria assess the financial and operational capacity of applicants, award criteria evaluate the alignment of the proposed action with the objectives, priorities, and expected outcomes stated in the guidelines.

From the Field – 6

One of the most frequently asked questions in grant proposal writing workshops is whether applicants can earn extra points by demonstrating good English skills. However, according to the evaluation rules, no additional points can be awarded (or deducted) for anything that is not explicitly stated in the official scoring table. For example, Tables 4 and 5, do not include any criteria related to language quality. Therefore, applicants will not gain extra points for fluent English, nor lose points for weak language skills. The only exception is if the text is so unclear that it affects overall comprehension. Only then the clarity may be considered.

What all applicants need to do here is to draft a general outline indicating how many points each section is worth and which areas they should allocate more space to. For example, the scoring criteria do not include a category for evaluating the response to the question “Where the action is the continuation of a previous action?” in the application document. Thus, while one or two sentences are sufficient to answer this question in a *concept note*, dedicating excessive space to it could lead to a loss of opportunity in other sections where higher scores can be earned.

6.3.4. Award Decision

This subsection explains how the final grant decisions are made. After reviewing all supporting documents, the evaluation committee recommends which projects should be funded. The final decision rests with the contracting authority, which may choose to award the grants, or in some critical cases, cancel the call entirely, without owing compensation to applicants. The award decision will include a list of selected projects, those not selected, and possibly a reserve list of projects that may be considered if additional funds become available.

6.3.5. Notification of the Contracting Authority’s Decision

This subsection outlines the process and timeline for notifying applicants about the application results. The contracting authority’s notification includes whether the application has been accepted, the results of the evaluation, and, if necessary, instructions for corrections or additional documents. If an application is rejected, the reasons for rejection are normally stated. Applicants can review these to make the necessary improvements for future applications. During this process, all project-related communication is conducted through the lead applicant.

6.3.6. Signature of the Grant Contract

This subsection explains the procedures and limitations that apply after a grant has been awarded but before the contract is signed. Therefore, the section informs applicants that upon selection, they will receive a standard grant contract. By signing the application form, applicants pre-commit to accepting the terms of these agreements. The section also clarifies that only minor corrections or clarifications to the budget or project description are allowed at this stage (such as correcting errors or addressing evaluation committee remarks). Crucially, no changes can increase the grant amount or alter the conditions laid out in the *guideline*.

From the Field – 7

In many cases, the lead institution (as the manager of the grant programme) acts as the programme owner and communicates with grant recipients primarily on the content and implementation of project activities. However, the Contracting Authority (carrying the financial responsibility of the grant) monitors project management and evaluation strictly through the grant contract. Experience shows that many grant recipients tend to sign the contract as a routine formality without reading it thoroughly. During field visits, recipients have often been unable to respond to the Contracting Authority's comments, as those remarks are based entirely on the grant contract. It is therefore strongly recommended that grant recipients read the contract carefully, fully understand their obligations, and be aware of their limits.

6.3.7. Indicative Timetable

This subsection provides an indicative timetable outlining the key steps and deadlines in the grant award process. The table is designed to give applicants a general overview of the expected timeline, from the launch of the call for proposals to the final contract signature. Table also includes important milestones such as the deadline for requesting clarifications, the date by which the contracting authority will respond, and the deadline for submitting applications (concept notes or *full proposals*, depending on the procedure type). The timeline for evaluation phases, notification of results, and the signing of the grant contract are also indicated on the table.

While some dates such as those for clarification requests and application submission, are fixed and binding, others are provisional and may be adjusted by the contracting authority. Any updates to the timetable will be published on the official websites where the call for proposals was originally announced, including the Funding & Tenders Portal. Applicants are advised to regularly check these platforms for changes.

From the Field – 8

The indicative timetable provided in the guidelines is indeed indicative, meaning that it does not set definitive dates. This is mainly due to frequent delays in communication between the Contracting Authority, the lead organisation managing the programme, the EU Delegation, and the European Commission. After applications are received, further delays may occur due to the personal schedules and social life of the grant evaluation committee members. Additionally, while some members may read and assess quickly, others may proceed at a much slower pace. Therefore, although dates such as information days and application deadlines usually take place as indicated in the timetable, most of the remaining dates tend to be delayed.

6.3.8. Early Detection and Exclusion System

This section informs applicants that if they or key related individuals are flagged for early detection or exclusion. If applicants or certain key individuals connected to them (such as those authorised to represent the entity, those with decision-making or control powers, persons bearing unlimited financial liability, individuals playing a critical role in the implementation of the project, or shareholders and affiliates of the applicant) are involved in circumstances that could lead to inclusion on the European Union's blacklist (such as corruption, irregularities, or fraud), their personal details may be registered in the EU's Early Detection and Exclusion System. These details may then be shared with relevant parties during the grant process.

For example, a municipality applies for an EU grant. The person designated as project coordinator had previously been investigated for issuing false invoices in another EU-funded project, and their name was entered into the EU's monitoring system. In such a case, the individual's name would appear during the new application process, and the EU may decide not to award the grant to a project involving that person.

6.4. List of Annexes

The List of Annexes includes documents provided to applicants as part of the call for proposals to support the application process. These annexes include both forms that must be completed during the application and additional informational documents.

The annexes typically include documents such as the application form, budget, logical framework, and legal documents (e.g., legal entity and financial identification forms). Additionally, informational documents such as the standard grant contract, general conditions, contract rules, and reporting templates are provided to the applicant for information.

CHAPTER 7: CONCEPT NOTE

7.1. Purpose of the Concept Note

A *concept note* is a concise document summarising the framework and main elements of a project submitted under a call for proposals. It is typically submitted during the first stage of the call (unless it is an open application, Table 6) and is used to assess the project’s overall eligibility. While less detailed than a *full application* form, the *concept note* must clearly present the project’s core elements, objectives, and goals. *Concept Note*’s primary purpose is to demonstrate that the project aligns with the objectives, priorities, and expectations of the call.

Table 6: Types of Call for Proposals in PRAG

<i>Open application</i>	<i>Two-step process; only shortlisted applicants submit full applications after concept note.</i>
<i>Restricted Call</i>	<i>All applicants submit concept note and full application together; both evaluated in two steps.</i>

A *concept note* is the point at which projects first meet donor organisations and ideas are presented concisely, and persuasively. It is a preliminary application form in which institutions that wish to implement a project set the whole idea within a limited space. In EU grant schemes this document (ePRAG, 2025e, p. 1-16) is restricted to five pages, and it must put forward the project’s objective, target group, main activities, expected results, and overall approach in a distinctive way.

To craft a short yet impactful *concept note*, applicants should avoid unnecessary detail, open with a compelling introduction, link objectives logically to results, and use clear, readable language. Additionally, strictly following every instruction contained in the *concept note* template is very important.

The *concept note* may be likened to the executive summary of a lengthy report prepared for senior managers. Many organisations issue detailed studies and reports throughout the year, but decision-makers rarely have time to read each one in depth. Instead, they rely on short summaries called the executive summary that highlight the essential findings. In much the same way, a concept note functions as an “executive summary” by presenting the applicant’s entire project idea to the evaluation committee within a concise framework.

Important Note – 7

In professional proposal writing, it is preferable to use institutional names instead of personal or unclear pronouns. For example, expressions like “the municipality will implement the activity” or “the Green Buildings Association will oversee monitoring” are clearer and more formal than using “we” or “they.” This writing style enhances precision and aligns with the expected tone of official project documents.

Capturing the essence, stating the core, rationale, and outcome of a subject in plain yet powerful language not only saves time but also demonstrates the writer’s intellectual depth and planning skill. An applicant’s true understanding of what they intend to achieve becomes evident through this ability to convey the substance. As Albert Einstein famously said, “If you cannot explain it simply, you do not understand it well enough.” For that reason, a *concept note* is more than a mere application form; it is a confident, strategic presentation of an idea. When writing one, the aim must be to express project concepts in a way everyone can understand, without sacrificing depth.

In a single call for proposals, hundreds (sometimes more than a thousand) of institutions may submit projects that share broadly similar objectives. Yet not every application can move directly on to the *full application* stage. Here, the *concept note* serves as a pre-selection tool. Evaluators examine every *concept note* received and invite only the most suitable and strong projects to submit a *full application*.

From the Field – 9
<i>In IPA grant evaluations, assessors are often independent experts or representatives of the lead institution, coming from varied professional backgrounds. For example, municipalities may assume evaluators understand local governance, but this is not always the case. A useful strategy is to have someone outside the institution read the draft. If they easily grasp the project’s aims and activities, the proposal is likely clear. If not, evaluators may also struggle to understand it.</i>

7.2. Cover Page Information

The first pages of the *concept note* include forms requesting basic information about the project and the applicant organisations. Below is a detailed explanation of the questions in the form and how to answer them:

- **Title of the Action:** The official name of the proposed project must be written here. The title should clearly reflect the project’s purpose and scope. It should be concise, memorable, original, and understandable. The title should also resonate with the target audience and align with the project’s theme. Additionally, for international projects, an easily pronounceable name can be advantageous. Ideal title consists of 4 or 5 words.
- **Number & Title of Lot:** Some grant programs include multiple application lots. For instance, Lot-1: €500,000-€250,000 for small-scale investments and Lot-2: €150,000-€100,000 for awareness-raising activities. If the call includes multiple lots, the relevant lot number and title should be specified. If no lots are given, “N/A” can be written or box can be left blank.
- **Location(s) of the Action:** The geographical areas where the project will be implemented should be stated, such as countries, regions, or cities.
- **Name of the Lead Applicant:** The full legal name of the lead applicant organisation must be entered. The lead applicant is the entity identified as the coordinator in the grant agreement and serves as the primary contact with the contracting authority. The lead applicant manages the project design and implementation and represents any partners involved.

- Nationality of the Lead Applicant: The country where the lead applicant is registered or based must be specified.
- Dossier No: This section refers to the reference number assigned by the Contracting Authority in the order in which applications are received. Applicants should not write anything in this box.
- EuropeAid ID: If applicable, the unique identification number assigned by EuropeAid must be provided. The EuropeAid ID is obtained by registering on the European Commission's PADOR system (<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/pador>). Once the organisation's information is completed and verified, the system generates a EuropeAid ID.
- Participant Identification Code: If applicable, the Participant Identification Code (PIC) must be provided. The PIC is obtained by registering the organisation in the European Commission's Participant Register. Once all required data is entered and validated, the system generates a unique PIC number. This code is mandatory under direct management but not required in indirect management where the Partner Country handles payments.
- Ongoing Contract/Legal Entity File Number (if available): If applicable, the number of any ongoing contracts or legal entity files should be included. This indicates whether the applicant (organisation or individual) has previously signed a contract with the European Commission and has a registered legal entity file. This file contains the organisation's legal name, structure, registration details, and financial information. If the applicant has a prior contract with the Commission, a legal entity file number will have been assigned. If no previous contracts exist with the EU, "N/A" should be written indicating it is the applicant's first submission.
- Legal Status: The legal status of the organisation (e.g., NGO, public institution, local government, private entity) must be indicated.
- Co-Applicant: A co-applicant contributes to the project design and implementation. After the grant agreement is signed, they become a joint beneficiary, with expenses considered eligible like those of the lead applicant. For example, in an education project where the lead applicant collaborates with a university to make a joint application, the university would be the co-applicant. The name and legal status of the co-applicant must be detailed as requested in the form (e.g., Green Future Association; TR202345678; Türkiye, 15 June 2012; NGO; strategic partner providing technical expertise to lead applicant).
- Affiliated Entity: An affiliated entity is an organisation with a structural link (legal or capital-based) to the lead or co-applicant. While not a party to the grant agreement, an affiliated entity participates in project implementation, and its eligible costs are covered. For instance, a local tourism agency affiliated with a municipality could be considered an affiliated entity. The relationships between the affiliated entities and the lead applicant must be described.
- Postal Address: The full postal address of the lead applicant must be entered.
- Telephone Number: Landline of the lead applicant, including country and city codes, must be provided (e.g., country code, city code, number).

- Fax Number: If applicable, the fax number should be included (e.g., country code, city code, number).
- Contact Person for this Action: The name of the person responsible for communications regarding the project should be indicated. It has been observed that some applications mistakenly list the highest-ranking representative of the lead organisation in this section. Instead, the name of a staff member well-acquainted with the project and responsible for communication regarding the application should be provided here.
- Contact Person's Email: The email address of the contact person must be provided.
- Address: The physical address of the lead applicant must be provided.
- Website of the Lead Applicant: The official website of the lead applicant organisation must be provided.

7.3. Summary of the Action

When examining a dress, a tailor immediately understands its stitching, and style. Similarly, project evaluation experts quickly form an impression of a project and the applicant's level of knowledge by reading the "Summary of Action" section. This section is the first step for evaluators to fully understand the project, making clarity and logical flow critical. The overall framework, objectives, outputs, and planned activities of the project therefore should be accurately conveyed in this initial impression.

"An action is composed of a set of activities." (ePRAG, 2025e, p.9)

An "action" is not a single activity but a series of interconnected activities serving a common goal. For example, organising a conference or publishing a book alone is not considered an action by the PRAG. These types of standalone activities only hold meaning (in terms of a project) when they are part of a broader structure aimed at achieving a larger objective. An action comprises activities strategically aligned to achieve general and specific objectives, addressing a specific problem or need. The results must be measurable and contribute to the broader picture.

Projects must develop in a logical sequence to ensure a solid foundation. Two primary approaches emerge in EU project writing. The first approach begins with specific activities and works towards broader objectives. This method is often used when decision-makers request staff to secure funding for particular activities. However, this approach can make it difficult to consider the project as a whole and may not fully align with the grant guidelines. Although common in practice, it is not ideal.

The second approach is based on a healthier project logic (Table 7). It begins with identifying a problem, followed by defining solution-oriented outputs. Then, the activities needed to achieve these outputs are planned. The given approach demonstrates that the project develops in a logical flow and aligns directly with its objectives.

Table 7: Hierarchy of Objectives and Outputs	
<i>Overall Objective (impact)</i>	
<i>Specific Objective 1 (outcome)</i>	<i>Specific Objective 2 (outcome)</i>
<i>Expected Outputs 1</i>	<i>Expected Outputs 2</i>
<i>Activity 1.1.</i>	<i>Activity 2.1.</i>
<i>Activity 1.2.</i>	<i>Activity 2.2.</i>
<i>Activity 1.3.</i>	<i>Activity 2.3.</i>

In both approaches, activities must align within an EU project logic. They should be grouped under specific components, with each component highlighting an “expected output.” These outputs must relate to the “specific objectives,” which in turn should support the “overall objective.” This way, the project is built on a coherent framework that provides the necessary structure to achieve its goals.

7.4. Description of the Action

In the PRAG template, this section allows for 2 pages written in “Arial 10” font, which corresponds to approximately 1000 words in total. This limited space must be effectively divided to ensure content depth across all sections while fully addressing the questions outlined in the guidelines. Proper word distribution enables each section to receive the required and meaningful focus (Table 8).

For instance, the introduction section should provide a detailed explanation of the context and analysis related to the preparation of the action. Since this forms the foundation of the project, it requires a larger allocation of space. On the other hand, the section explaining the intervention logic should focus on clear and concise descriptions of outputs, outcomes, and risks without going into excessive detail.

Table 8: Word Distribution for the Summary of the Action		
<i>Section</i>	<i>Short Headings for Sections</i>	<i>Wording</i>
<i>Background</i>	<i>Background and Context Analysis</i>	<i>250</i>
<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Objectives of the Action</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>Key Stakeholders and Consultations</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>Intervention Logic</i>	<i>Intervention Logic and Risks</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>Activities</i>	<i>Proposed Activities Overview</i>	<i>250</i>
<i>Cross-Cutting Issues</i>	<i>Cross-Cutting Issues Integration</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Broad Timeframe and Factors</i>	<i>100</i>

The weight of each section should be determined based on its ability to address the relevant questions in the *guidelines*. The document must avoid unnecessary gaps and utilise the entire space efficiently. Therefore, when planning word distribution, the importance of each section and the points given to that section by the *guideline* should be carefully considered. By this way, evaluators gain a clearer understanding of the document and increases the likelihood of a successful application.

The PRAG template for the *concept note* requires applicants to provide the requested information under the given headings and in the specified order. Many EU project writing trainings suggest removing the headings to save space. However, this suggestion is likely made by individuals who have

not previously served as evaluators. The headings are included to ensure that all projects follow a similar format and are directly linked to the scoring grid. Hence, keeping the headings is an effective technique which makes it easy for evaluators to follow the narrative and score the proposal more easily.

From the Field – 10
<i>“Maximum 2 pages” really means exactly that. Some applicants try to impress by going beyond the limit, submitting a third page to show effort or detail. However, during evaluation, the third page is not assessed. Evaluators are instructed to ignore any content beyond the page limit. In many cases, the extra page is physically removed by the committee secretary before files are even distributed. Respecting format rules is about discipline, as well as ensuring fairness for all applicants.</i>

That said, to gain more space within the text, the headings can be shortened (Table 8). For example, the heading “Give the background to the preparation of the action, in particular on the sector/country/regional context (including key challenges). Mention any specific analysis/study carried out to inform the design (context analysis)” can be shortened to “Background and Context Analysis.” This method still complies with the *guideline* and prevents unnecessary use of space.

7.4.1. Background and Context Analysis

In Chapter 5, the “Business Case” under the PM² methodology was introduced as a tool for presenting the rationale behind a project. Business Case outlines the strategic relevance, expected benefits, costs, and potential alternatives, thereby giving decision-makers a clear justification for the proposed investment. The “Background and Context Analysis” section builds on that foundation. Each project should begin by providing a deeper understanding of the problem the project seeks to address and position itself within the wider policy, institutional, and socio-economic environment.

Background and Context Analysis section lays the groundwork for the application by explaining the rationale behind the project. Therefore, it should answer the central question: “Why is this project necessary?” Like the introduction of an academic paper that highlights the relevance of the topic and frames the existing issues, this part should set the scene by presenting the broader context with key challenges, and summarizing the preparatory efforts made.

“Context: Context is the overall set of organisational (internal) and external factors that influence or determine the need for the project and its urgency.” (PM², p. 125)

There are three key elements that the application should demonstrate in the subsection:

- Sectoral context (e.g., services for persons with disabilities, digital transformation, women’s employment)
- National/regional context (e.g., the situation in the country and in the specific location)
- Main challenges and opportunities (e.g., capacity gaps, regulatory shortcomings, regional disparities)

Section also the place to show what triggered the project’s development. Every project, much like a research study, is shaped by a core problem. Consequently, section should outline the current difficulties and refer to any prior analyses, reports, or studies that informed the project design. Building a strong case for funding requires grounding the proposal in realistic needs and supporting it with clear evidence.

“In the design phase, context analysis is a preliminary analysis which guides successive, more focused assessments.” (EC, 2025g)

Therefore, this section should address four interlinked components in respective order to justify the need for the proposed action. Background to the preparation refers to how the idea for the action emerged, including any institutional, policy, or local developments that triggered the initiative. Sector/country/regional context should provide an overview of the current situation in the relevant field and geographical area, drawing attention to trends, gaps, or constraints. Key challenges relate to the main problems or obstacles that the action seeks to address. Finally, specific analysis or studies carried out (context analysis) refers to any evidence-based work, including surveys, needs assessments, or research that informed the design of the action, helping ensure that it is tailored, realistic, and grounded in real needs.

Important Note – 8
<i>This section addresses four specific questions: “background to the preparation of the action,” “sector/country/regional context,” “key challenges,” and “any specific analysis/study carried out to inform the design (context analysis).” Therefore, it is recommended to answer each question and, if possible, to highlight the subheadings using the keyword formatting style indicated in the Annex sample.</i>

7.4.2. Objectives of the Action

The objectives of the action define the key impact, outcomes and changes the project aims to achieve. They jointly guide the entire process by outlining the project’s scope, purpose, and impact and are generally categorised into overall objectives and specific objectives.

“An objective is a target or metric that a person or organisation seeks to meet. It can be the desired output of a change/project and is usually defined in terms of scope, time, cost and quality.” (PM², p. 130)

The overall objective represents the broader, long-term change the action seeks to contribute to. It is indirectly linked to the project and aligns with a larger strategic goal, such as “enhancing local community resilience to climate change.” The overall objective should correspond to national or international policy frameworks and align with development priorities.

Specific objectives, on the other hand, are the direct results the project aims to achieve to support the overall objective. These objectives should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). For instance, “improving the capacity of local governments to prepare sustainable energy plans” or “facilitating women’s access to tourism-related economic opportunities” are examples of specific objectives.

“The Principal objective (overall objective) explains the longer-term, indirect change or the impact of the Action. The achievement of the objective depends on a multitude of factors and actions which are in large part outside the control of the Action.” (EC, 2025h)

The Specific objective is what the partner intends to achieve by implementing the Action. It should address the core problems or some of them as identified in the findings of the problem, needs and risk analysis in accordance with the strategy outlined in the response analysis.” (EC, 2025h)

In this section, the objectives outlined in the “Summary of the Action” should be restated with additional details. Each objective’s alignment with the project context and its response to identified needs should also be explained. Moreover, the connection between these objectives, planned activities, and expected outcomes should be shortly emphasised.

Example 1: Overall and Specific Objective
<p><u>Overall Objective (Impact)</u> is to improve social inclusion and equal access to municipal services for persons with disabilities. This objective describes the long-term social change the project aims to contribute to. It goes beyond the project’s direct control but represents the broader purpose. Here, the aim is to reduce exclusion and ensure that persons with disabilities can participate fully and equally in public life by influencing both physical and institutional environments. <u>Specific Objective 1 (Outcome)</u>: is to enhance the physical accessibility of public parks in the municipality. This outcome is a concrete and measurable result that the project will deliver. SP1 refers to eliminating physical barriers in public parks through universal design elements. The goal is to make urban green spaces safely usable by all, regardless of ability. <u>Specific Objective 2 (Outcome)</u> is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the municipality to deliver inclusive and accessible services. This outcome focuses on developing the skills, knowledge, and systems within the municipality to sustain inclusive practices. SP2 includes staff training, policy development, and the integration of accessibility standards into planning and service delivery. The aim is to ensure long-term organisational change.</p>

7.4.3. Key Stakeholders and Consultations

Stakeholder groups typically include direct beneficiaries, indirect beneficiaries, and other parties involved in project implementation. Direct beneficiaries, such as people with disabilities or small businesses, benefit directly from the action’s activities. Indirect beneficiaries, on the other hand, are groups that benefit from the project’s overall impact without direct involvement. For example, a disability-focused NGO not directly involved in the project or a chamber of commerce representing SMEs could be considered indirect beneficiaries.

Key stakeholder groups play a crucial role in the success of the action, and their attitudes toward and contributions to the project should be detailed in this section. Stakeholder analysis serves as a tool to identify how target groups will impact the project and how they will be affected by it.

“A stakeholder is any individual, group or organisation that can affect, be (positively or negatively) affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by the project. A stakeholder can also exert influence over the project and its deliverables” (PM², p. 138)

From the Field – 11

In a project training session, the trainer shows the class an empty jar. First, the trainer places large rocks inside and asks, “Is it full?” The class replies, “Yes!” Then small pebbles are added, followed by the same question and the same answer. Sand comes next, and finally, water is poured in. The trainer explains that this jar represents the stakeholder group. If strategic and influential institutions are placed first, a strong foundation is formed. However, that doesn’t mean the group is complete. There is always room for additional voices and contributions. What matters is getting the order of inclusion right.

The attitudes of each stakeholder group toward the project should be assessed, as this can significantly influence its success. Therefore, a consultation process is an effective method to involve stakeholders and gather their feedback. This process may include workshops, surveys, one-on-one interviews, or meetings. As a result of consultations, stakeholders’ interest and engagement in the project may increase, and their support can help address potential challenges.

Important Note – 9

This section addresses three specific questions: “key stakeholder groups,” “their attitudes towards the action,” and “any consultations.” This means that key stakeholders should first be clearly identified. Following this, the consultation process or engagement meetings should be described in detail, including how and when stakeholders were involved. Finally, their overall attitude toward the project (such as their level of support, concerns raised, or commitments made) should be stated as well.

7.4.4. Intervention Logic and Risks

This section requires detailed information regarding the project’s intervention logic, associated risks, and underlying assumptions. Considering the evaluation table (Table 4) provided in the grant guidelines, the intervention logic section accounts for 10 points, while risks and assumptions contribute 5 points. Therefore, this section requires particular attention.

“The intervention logic of a project explains (and visualises) the overall concept of a project and explains how change happens by starting from the identified needs for project action to the anticipated impacts that would reduce the needs” (URBACT, 2025)

The intervention logic is a model to explain how an action will create change from addressing a need to achieving the expected impact. This process forms the foundation of the project’s logical framework and defines the relationship between outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Logic also evaluates the assumptions and risks involved in achieving the objectives.

“Outputs (Deliverables): Deliverables are agreed, verifiable project outputs which will result in an outcome for the receiving party.” (PM², p. 138)

Outputs are the direct and tangible results of project activities. They are the tools necessary for contributing to the project’s success. For example, conducting 10 training sessions, preparing a report, or developing policy recommendations can be considered expected outputs in a capacity building project. These outputs must be delivered within a specific timeframe and under the project’s control.

“Outcomes comprise the direct results of the usage (implementation) of project outputs by the customer. Outcomes allow the organisation to achieve the intended benefits of a Project.” (PM², p. 138)

Outcomes are the changes achieved when outputs are utilised by target groups or stakeholders. For example, after the training sessions, an increase in the planning capacities of local governments could be considered an outcome. Outcomes serve as indicators of the project’s successful implementation and must be measurable.

“Impact (of a project): The impact measures the (permanent or temporary) effect of a project on the organisation’s processes, policies, technology, culture and people, or on the external environment.” (PM², p. 128)

Impacts refer to the long-term and broader changes brought about by the project, and often influenced by factors outside the project’s direct control. For instance, enhanced capacity of local governments in climate change planning could lead to increased community resilience to climate change over time. Impacts generally emerge after the project is concluded.

The intervention logic also includes assumptions and potential risks necessary to achieve the objectives. Assumptions are the conditions required for the project’s success, such as continued political stability or active participation from target groups. Risks, on the other hand, are uncertainties that threaten the project’s success, such as natural disasters, economic crises, or a lack of collaboration among stakeholders. While identifying risks, strategies for mitigating them should also be outlined.

“Assumption: An assumption is a hypothesis or piece of unconfirmed information that is considered to be true, and is used in order to proceed with an activity.” (PM², p. 122)

“Risk: A risk is an uncertain event or set of events (positive or negative) that, should it occur, will have an effect on the achievement of project objectives. A risk is generally measured by a combination of the likelihood (probability of the risk happening) and the size of the impact on the Project.” (PM², p. 137)

A response to the “Intervention logic and risks” question of the application form, should begin by explaining the project’s overall logic. The narrative should outline how the process from problem identification to solution is planned, followed by a clear description of expected outputs. Then, medium-term outcomes and the broader, long-term impacts should be discussed.

The easiest way to support the narrative described above is through the *Theory of Change*. IF the identified problem is addressed through planned interventions, THEN specific outputs will be achieved (e.g., organising training programs or preparing reports). IF these outputs are effectively utilised by the target groups, THEN medium-term outcomes will emerge (e.g., improving local planning capacities or strengthening stakeholder participation). IF these outcomes are sustainably supported, THEN long-term, broad-scale impacts will be achieved, such as enhancing community resilience or implementing systemic policy changes.

“Theory of Change: In the international Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) community, it is regarded as a tool or an approach that supports the effective design, implementation and evaluation of a programme. It does this by defining and documenting the chain(s) of causes and effects, from programme activities to desired final objectives, to make the underlying intervention logic more explicit.” (EC, 2024)

Finally, potential risks, strategies to address them, and the assumptions required to achieve outputs and impacts can be summarised in a table, including risk weights, to optimise space (Table 9).

Table 9: Sample Risk Table			
<i>Risks</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Assumption</i>
<i>Risk 1</i>	<i>Low, moderate or high</i>	<i>Mitigation for Risk 1</i>	<i>Assumption for Risk 1</i>

7.4.5. Proposed Activities Overview

The activities proposed in the application represent concrete steps toward achieving the general and specific objectives of the action. Grouping project activities under specific clusters facilitates both the project narrative and its management.

The types of activities proposed are typically categorised based on key project areas. Two common categorisation methods are widely used (Table 10). The first method is “nature-based grouping,” where activities are grouped by their nature to form a cluster. For instance, preparing a leaflet with the project’s main slogan, creating an informational poster about nature within the project’s scope, and organising an exhibition showcasing project outcomes can all be grouped under awareness-raising activities despite focusing on different sub-goals.

The second method, “flow-based grouping,” involves organising activities based on input-output relationships. For example, a desk study is conducted, followed by the preparation of a survey informed by the desk study’s findings. The survey results then serve as the basis for develop a plan.

Table 10: Grouping Activities by Clusters			
<i>Nature-Based Grouping</i>		<i>Flow-Based Grouping</i>	
<i>Capacity Building</i>	<i>Awareness Raising</i>	<i>Plan Development</i>	<i>Model Development</i>
<i>Training</i>	<i>Leaflets</i>	<i>Desk study</i>	<i>Research</i>
<i>Conference</i>	<i>Exhibits</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<i>Workshop</i>	<i>Posters</i>	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Modelling</i>

When describing activities in this section, the allocated word count (approximately 130 words) should be distributed equally among proposed activity clusters. While the explanation might seem brief, activities will need to be reintroduced later in relation to target groups. Therefore, providing concise descriptions of the activities under each cluster will be enough.

7.4.6. Cross-Cutting Issues Integration

This section corresponds to the “2.5 Cross-Cutting Elements” part of the evaluation table in the grant guidelines and carries a weight of 5 points. The question itself provides guidance by highlighting the key issues to be addressed. The guideline identifies nine key cross-cutting issues that might be mainstreamed throughout the Action: promotion of human rights, gender equality, democracy, good governance, support to youth, children’s rights, indigenous peoples, environmental sustainability, and combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country or region). Therefore, emphasising at least five keywords mentioned in the question can help secure full points. Connections can be established by referencing the project’s activities or describing its management methodology in

relation to the keywords. Approximately 100 words should be allocated to this section, with each of the five keywords explained in 20 words, detailing how they are mainstreamed within the project.

7.4.7. Broad Timeframe and Factors

Under the PM² methodology, a project lifecycle consists of four phases: initiating, planning, executing, and closing. Hence, overall timeframe of the action should cover all phases while considering specific factors that may impact the schedule. The monitoring and control process, as outlined in the PM² methodology, is an integral part of the project lifecycle. The process begins in the initiation phase and continues through to the end of the closing phase, covering the entire lifecycle. A well-defined timeframe also clarifies planning thereby contributing to the success of the action.

The initiating phase involves defining the project outcomes, preparing the implementation plan, and mapping stakeholders. As the EU provides grants for mature project ideas, this phase corresponds to the *concept note* and *full application* stages of the grant programme.

The planning phase includes pre-implementation consultations with stakeholders, analysing the current situation, and detailed planning. During this period, changes affecting project implementation between proposal preparation and grant agreement signing should be reassessed. Project teams are also mobilised during this phase, which can range from one to three months, depending on the project's scale.

The executing phase is when the project's main activities are carried out. Activities may need to be rescheduled based on their starting periods. For instance, an educational project with students scheduled for the second month may face delays if the project starts in summer, coinciding with school vacations. To avoid such issues, the planning phase must reassess the execution phase.

The closing phase involves reporting project results and establishing structures to ensure sustainability. The phase includes analysing outputs and impacts and initiating sustainability measures.

Monitoring and control activities continue throughout the entire lifecycle, tracking alignment with objectives. Monitoring evaluates progress and compares it with plans, while control identifies deviations, addresses risks, and ensures performance is maintained through corrective actions.

Example 2: Sample Action Timeframe											
M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
		1.2.		3.1.		4.2.		3.3.			
Planning		Executing							Closing		
Monitoring & Controll											

The *concept note* section also requires mentioning specific factors affecting the timeframe. Seasonal constraints (e.g., agricultural activities), election periods, and summer holidays are examples of such factors. If directly relevant to the project, these factors must be integrated into the project plan.

Given the limited space in a two-page document to address all questions and evaluate activity timelines and factors, presenting this section in a table format can significantly resolve space

limitations. Example 2's suggested format divides the project lifecycle into PM² phases and outlines all activities with corresponding timelines. The numbers such as "1.2." and "3.1." in the table refer to the activity numbers outlined in the "Summary of the Action" section of the project. The use of the "M" label for months (e.g., M1, M2) avoids the need to reference specific months like July, October, or January, focusing instead on providing evaluators with a general understanding of the implementation schedule.

7.5. Relevance of the Action

A project proposal is like a well-written novel. If it fails to captivate the reader in the opening pages, the rest hardly matters. The Relevance section plays precisely that opening-chapter role, answering the evaluator's question of "Is this project the right response to the right problem at the right time and place?"

Relevance to the call for proposals resembles the relationship between a key and a lock. Every project is a key, and all keys are for locks. Yet only one is cut to match the specific lock (meaning, aligned with the call and its objectives). Even the most brilliant idea remains outside if that specific cut is missing. Evaluators look for this alignment in the very first lines.

Relevance to national or regional needs requires the skill of a tailor. Off-the-rack clothing fits no one perfectly; likewise, a project must be "cut" to the socio-economic fabric, cultural texture, and concrete needs of its setting. National priorities offer a broad frame, but local problems differ in tone, severity, and solution pathways. The same youth strategy may confront entirely different barriers from one city to another.

Relevance to key stakeholders, on the other hand, is similar to tuning an instrument. No matter how carefully a project is planned, if it is not tuned to the voices of its target group and critical stakeholders, the melody will be discordant. Projects designed without the active involvement of relevant institutions and communities, fail to inspire genuine ownership. That is why any proposal must explain whom it consulted, how their needs were reflected, and how the action resonates with these groups.

Funders allocate resources only to projects that serve their strategic priorities. Target groups embrace only initiatives that address their real needs. And only those initiatives grounded in genuine needs prove sustainable over time.

Table 11: Word Distribution for the Relevance of the Action		
<i>Section</i>	<i>Short Headings for Sections</i>	<i>Wording</i>
<i>Relevance to CfP</i>	<i>Relevance to Objectives and Sectors</i>	200
<i>Context Needs</i>	<i>Relevance to Context Needs</i>	700
<i>Beneficiaries Needs</i>	<i>Beneficiaries Needs and Constraints</i>	700
<i>Added Value</i>	<i>Added-Value Elements</i>	200

The PRAG template allows a maximum of 3 pages for the Relevance section of the *concept note*. When written in Arial 10 font, 3 pages correspond to approximately 1800 words. Considering the

scoring criteria outlined in Table 4, using the word distribution specified in Table 11 ensures an effective allocation.

7.5.1. Relevance to Objectives and Sectors

In this section, applicants are required to explain how the proposed action aligns with the objectives, priorities, and themes specified in the call for proposals. As outlined in the PRAG template, this section includes 3 sub-questions. To guide the evaluator in accordance with the PRAG template, keeping the headings is recommended, although they can be shortened as shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Shortened Heading for Objectives and Sectors	
Heading in the PRAG Template	Shortened heading
<i>Describe the relevance of the action to the objective(s) and priority(ies) of the call for proposals.</i>	<i>Relevance to Objectives and Priorities of the CfP</i>
<i>Describe the relevance of the action to any specific subthemes/sectors/areas and any other specific requirements stated in the guidelines for applicants, e.g. local ownership etc.</i>	<i>Relevance to subthemes and sectors of the CfP</i>
<i>Describe which of the expected results referred to in the guidelines for applicants will be addressed.</i>	<i>Relevance to expected results the CfP</i>

Under the heading “Relevance to Objectives and Priorities of the CfP,” the alignment of the action with the general and specific objectives of the call should be explained. The project must demonstrate how its objectives align with the objectives and priorities set out in the *guideline*. For example, if the call’s objective is to “enhance the environmental sustainability capacities of local governments,” the proposal should detail how the action will contribute to this goal and support it through specific activities.

“Priority refers to the numerical value given to a project item (requirement, risk, task, etc.) to classify its relative importance in comparison with other items.” (PM², p. 132)

Additionally, how the project contributes to the priorities of the call (e.g., promoting gender equality or protecting human rights) should be elaborated. To substantiate the project’s relevance to these objectives and priorities, applicants should cite relevant text from the call and connect it to the proposed action.

Under the heading “Relevance to Subthemes and Sectors of the CfP,” the relationship between the action and the subthemes, sectors, or specific areas mentioned in the call should be explained. For instance, a call may emphasise themes such as “climate change” or “local participation” while prioritising sectors like “environmental management” or “local governance.” In such cases, the thematic and sectoral priorities outlined in the guidelines should be referenced, followed by an explanation of the project’s relevance.

“As per Guidelines for grant applicants, and in line with OECD DAC definition, the term “results” includes “impact (overall objective)”, “outcome(s) (specific objective)” and “output(s).” (ePRAG, 2025e, p.7)

Finally, the action’s relevance to the “expected results” specified in the guidelines should also be addressed. However, while some guidelines clearly define expected results, others do not. In cases

where results are not explicitly stated, they should be interpreted as a combination of the general objectives, specific objectives, and outputs outlined in the guidelines.

Another way to write this section is to present everything in one clear paragraph while underlining keywords such as “the overall objective of the *CfP* is...” or “the priorities of the *CfP* include...”. After each objective or priority is mentioned, a direct explanation of relevance should follow, showing how the proposed action aligns with it. Table 12 takes a structured approach with subheadings, while the sample proposal in the annex uses this paragraph style. Applicants can choose the format that best fits their word limit and overall structure.

7.5.2. Relevance to Context Needs

This section requires applicants to provide a detailed explanation of how the proposed action addresses the specific needs and challenges of the target country, region, or sectors. Additionally, applicants must explain how the action creates synergies with other development initiatives and avoids duplication. A comprehensive evaluation of the action’s context, analysis of issues, and proposed solutions must be presented with possible references. Information on alignment and complementarity with relevant national, regional, or local plans, previous projects, or other programs must also be included.

Table 13: Shortened Headings for Relevance to Context Needs	
<i>Question in the Template</i>	<i>Shortened heading</i>
<i>State clearly the specific pre-project situation in the target country/countries, region(s) and/or sectors (include quantified data analysis where possible).</i>	<i>Pre-project Situation Analysis</i>
<i>Provide a detailed analysis of the problems to be addressed by the action and how they are interrelated at all levels.</i>	<i>Problem Analysis</i>
<i>Refer to any significant plans undertaken at national, regional and/or local level relevant to the action and describe how the action will relate to such plans.</i>	<i>Relevance to Plans</i>
<i>Where the action is the continuation of a previous action, clearly indicate how it is intended to build on the activities/results of this previous action; refer to the main conclusions and recommendations of any evaluations carried out.</i>	<i>Where the action is the continuation or part of a larger programme</i>
<i>Where the action is part of a larger programme, clearly explain how it fits or is coordinated with that programme or any other planned project. Specify the potential synergies with other initiatives, in particular by the European Commission.</i>	<i>(to be answered within the above heading)</i>
<i>Explain the complementarity with other initiatives supported by the EU and by other donors (Member States & others).</i>	<i>EU Initiative Complementarity</i>

As indicated in Table 12, approximately 700 words are sufficient for this section. To use the limited space effectively, it is recommended to shorten the headings, as outlined in the Table.

Under the heading “Pre-project Situation Analysis,” the pre-project situation in the target country and region must be described to provide a clear understanding of the context. This section should include data supported by objective indicators, such as economic, social, and environmental metrics. The relevant sector of implementation must also be explained. The aim here is to present the current state and general conditions, without delving into issue analysis. It has been observed that many applicants mistakenly focus on problem areas in this section during evaluations.

Example 3: Sector Context
<i>The agriculture sector accounts for 17% of total employment nationally, while this figure is 24% in the project region. In the same region, agricultural products constitute 32% of total economic output, reflecting the sector’s significant role in the local economy. In the field of education, the literacy rate stands at 85% nationally, whereas it is 72% in the project region, indicating differing educational dynamics within the national context.</i>

When explaining the context of the target country, region, or sector, referencing enhances the credibility and accuracy of the information presented. References make the narrative more concrete for evaluators. Economic, social, or environmental references support an objective portrayal of the current situation and demonstrate the project’s alignment with identified needs. As emphasised frequently, references should be concise and not occupy excessive space. For instance, when citing information from the European Commission’s Green Deal document, the following format is sufficient: “... (EC, 2020, Green Deal)”.

Another example is providing the reference within the sentence. Here, the relevant information can be written as follows: “As stated in the report published by the European Commission in 2024 (COM(2024) 369 final), ...”. Integrating details from the referenced document into the sentence adds contextual clarity and supports the smooth narrative flow.

After describing the pre-project situation, the “Problem Analysis” subsection should address the issues arising from the country, region, and sectoral context discussed in the previous section. The problems to be addressed by the project and their impacts at the local, regional, or national levels should be stated. The aim is to present a context that explains the challenges of the current situation and the necessity of the project.

“A problem is an existing state that can potentially affect the organisation’s goals.” (PM², p. 132)

For example, in a project focused on the agricultural sector, if the previous section states, “The agricultural sector constitutes 24% of total employment in the project region,” the problems arising from this situation should be explained here. For instance, while the agricultural sector holds significant importance for employment, issues such as inadequate technological infrastructure and limited water resources might negatively affect productivity. This, in turn, might weaken the local economy and lead to instability in household incomes.

For a project focused on the education sector, if the previous section highlights that literacy rates in the project region are below the national average, this section should elaborate on the problems caused by low education levels. For instance, low literacy rates may limit young people's participation in the labour force, negatively impacting economic growth. Similarly, inequalities in access to educational opportunities may deepen social divides. Therefore, when analysing problems, it is also essential to explain the interconnections between these issues.

Finally, in this section, it is beneficial to highlight not only the relationship between the problems and the current situation but also the risks they may pose if left unaddressed.

Under the "Relevance to Plans" subsection, the relationship between the project and plans at the national, regional, and local levels should be explained. However, upon carefully reading the question in the heading, one could note that in addition to describing the plans, the relationship between the project and these plans must also be addressed. Therefore, for each level, after describing the relevant plan, the project's alignment with the plan should also be explained.

As a starting point, plans from the province or municipality where the project will be implemented can be described. For instance, sustainable development plans, transportation master plans, or environmental management strategies prepared by the municipality should be referred to if they are relevant to the project. Following this, the regional level should be addressed, detailing how the project aligns with regional plans. Administrative structures vary by country: some have regional administrations, while others lack regional governance but still maintain regional development strategies. In some cases, regional development agencies exist and are responsible for developing regional plans.

At the national level, references should be made to the country's development plans and sector-specific national policies and strategies relevant to the project. For example, if the project is developed around the theme of climate change, references to the sections of the national development plan addressing climate change, as well as the national climate change strategy, should be included.

Although not explicitly required in the question, as previously noted, the highest score is awarded to the most comprehensive answer. To strengthen the response, it is advisable to include references to relevant European Union plans at the continental level and United Nations plans at the global level. In this way, the narrative begins at the local level and extends through regional, national, continental, and global dimensions.

As outlined in Table 13, two sub-questions (which are not assigned any points in the scoring table) are merged into a single question titled "Where the action is the continuation of a previous action or part of a larger programme" to save space. In this section, applicants are expected to explain whether the action is a continuation of a previous project and how the results and outputs of that project have provided a foundation for the current one.

First, it is essential to clearly describe the activities and outcomes of the previous project. For instance, if a project under the "EU-Türkiye Town Twinning Grant Programme" established a partnership with an EU municipality to promote sustainable environmental policies and received funding, the same municipalities might apply for Phase II of the grant program or use their established partnership to apply for a different grant. In such cases, the initiative could be categorised under "continuation of a previous action." However, if the new application presents an innovative approach, this does not pose

a problem. Conversely, if the new project merely replicates previous activities, such as providing the same certification training to another 50 participants, it risks being considered insufficiently original.

If the same partnership presents a new idea, the focus should shift to lessons learned from the previous project. Challenges encountered and solutions developed during implementation should be highlighted. Moreover, the key findings and recommendations from evaluations of the previous project should be integrated into the new project. For example, “The final report of the previous project emphasised the need for greater support for sustainability efforts; therefore, this project includes the development of sustainability action plans.”

Repetitive events or routine activities supported annually may lack originality, reducing their likelihood of success. For instance, proposing a “4th Hazelnut Festival” without new elements could be perceived as lacking innovation.

The second part of the merged question requires explaining whether the action is part of a larger program. For instance, a grant programme under the “Western Balkans Climate Capacity Building Programme” could consist of technical assistance and grant components. The grant component might complement the technical assistance by supporting local initiatives while the latter provides training materials. In this case, a concise explanation could be provided, such as: “The grant component aims to enhance local governments’ climate adaptation capacities, while the technical assistance component provides tools and guidance. This project includes activities to implement these tools on the ground.”

Finally, under the “EU Initiative Complementarity” subheading, applicants should explain how their project complements other initiatives supported by the EU or other donors (e.g., Member States & others). This explanation should demonstrate how the proposal aligns with broader frameworks and has the potential to create synergy. When detailing the project’s relationship with EU-supported initiatives, applicants could reference programs like the European Green Deal, Horizon Europe, or the European Regional Development Fund. For example: “This project aligns with Horizon Europe’s carbon neutrality goals by promoting energy efficiency solutions at the local level.”

In this section, applicants should clearly articulate how their project is unique and avoids duplication with existing initiatives. This can be achieved by highlighting innovative methods, specific target groups, or tailored local solutions. Applicants should reference existing programs to demonstrate complementarity while emphasising how their project addresses unmet needs or unexplored gaps.

7.5.3. Beneficiaries Needs and Constraints

Target groups and final beneficiaries refer to individuals, communities, or organisations that are directly or indirectly impacted by the project. Therefore identifying their needs and constraints is vital for understanding the relevance and potential impact of the action. Target groups are those who directly benefit from and participate in the project activities, while final beneficiaries are broader groups that experience indirect, long-term benefits from the project outcomes.

Table 14: Shortened Headings for Beneficiaries Needs and Constraints	
<i>Heading in the Template</i>	<i>Shortened heading</i>
<i>Give a description of each of the target groups and final beneficiaries (if different from target groups), quantify them where possible, and include selection criteria.</i>	<i>Description of target groups and final beneficiaries</i>
<i>Identify the needs and constraints (including capacity constraints) of each of the target groups and final beneficiaries (if different from target groups).</i>	<i>Their needs and constraints</i>
<i>Demonstrate the relevance of the proposal to the needs and constraints of the target groups and final beneficiaries (if different from target groups).</i>	<i>Relevance to proposal</i>
<i>Explain any participatory process ensuring participation by the target groups and final beneficiaries (if different from target groups).</i>	<i>Participatory involvement process</i>

As shown in the table above, shortening the headings in this section can save space when preparing the proposal. When analysing the structure, the section requires addressing four narratives: defining target groups and final beneficiaries, identifying their problems, explaining how the project addresses these issues, and describing participatory processes during both design and implementation phases.

“Target groups are the recipients of the goods and services produced by the action, or whose skills or capacities have changed because of the action. The target group may or may not be the individuals or organisations that, ultimately, are intended to benefit from the action (final beneficiaries).” (ePRAG, 2025e, p.6).

“Final beneficiaries are defined as the individuals, groups, or organisations, whether targeted or not, that benefit, directly or indirectly, from the action in the long term at the level of the society or sector at large. The ‘final beneficiaries’ are not to be confused with the (Beneficiary of a grant contract).” (ePRAG, 2025e, p.6).

Under the “Description of target groups and final beneficiaries” heading, each target group and final beneficiary should be defined in detail. Characteristics such as demographic structure, size, and direct relation to the project should be explained. Final beneficiaries should be viewed from a broader perspective, representing groups that benefit from the project’s results in the long term. This section should focus solely on defining the groups, why they were selected, and how they will benefit from the project without going into problem analysis.

From the Field – 12
<i>In a project application, the target group was listed as “farmers” since they were to benefit from improved agricultural services. However, during review, it became clear that the direct recipients of project activities were actually municipal agricultural staff – those being trained, equipped, and supported. While farmers remain the final beneficiaries, it is essential to define the target group as the people receiving the project’s goods and services directly, which in this case are municipal employees.</i>

Target groups are directly affected by project activities and experience positive changes. For example, in an agricultural project, the target group could be local farmers who directly benefit from training

sessions, technical support, or grant programs. When describing target groups, demographic details such as “The target group consists of 200 farmers aged 30–50, residing in the project area and engaged in agriculture” must be included. Selection criteria should also be clearly stated, for example: “Farmers will be selected based on farm size, type of production, and willingness to actively participate in the project.”

Final beneficiaries, on the other hand, are broader groups indirectly affected by the project outcomes. For instance, in the agricultural project, final beneficiaries could include the entire local population who benefit from increased agricultural productivity and more affordable food. They can be described in general terms, such as: “The project’s final beneficiaries include the 50,000 residents of the target area.”

Following the definitions, the “Their needs and constraints” heading should identify the needs and limitations of target groups and final beneficiaries. This analysis should explain the challenges posed by the current situation and how they impact the groups. However, only issues directly relevant to the project should be included to maintain a clear link between problems and proposed activities.

For example, in the agricultural project, local farmers might need to improve productivity and market access but face constraints such as limited knowledge of modern agricultural techniques, scarce water resources, and restricted access to financial tools. For instance, insufficient knowledge of irrigation methods might lead to inefficient water use, which reduces productivity and lowers income levels.

For final beneficiaries, constraints could include limited access to agricultural products and food security issues. For example, reduced agricultural output can lead to higher food prices, making it difficult for local communities to access affordable food.

From the Field – 13

In one of the least developed countries, a development agency representative visited a village where women walked 3 kilometres daily to fetch water. Wanting to help, she quickly funded a central fountain. Yet the pipes kept breaking. Later it was discovered that the village women were damaging them. The daily walk was their only social time in a closed and conservative community. This shows that problems must be understood with the target group, not assumed from behind a desk.

After outlining the problems, the “Relevance to proposal” heading should explain how project activities provide solutions to these issues. For example, if the target group consists of local farmers facing challenges like low productivity and limited knowledge, the project proposal should detail how it addresses these issues through training programs and innovative irrigation techniques. For final beneficiaries, the narrative could focus on improving food security and economic stability through enhanced agricultural productivity, demonstrating the link between target group activities and indirect benefits for broader populations.

Finally, under the “Participatory involvement process” heading, how the project was designed to address the needs of target groups and final beneficiaries should be discussed. The design phase should involve participatory processes, including direct consultations with these groups, focus group meetings, and consultations with civil society organisations (CSOs) representing them.

During the design phase, feedback on challenges and needs can be gathered through interviews and workshops. For example, meetings with local farmers may identify issues like production challenges, market access problems, and financing needs. Such feedback informs the planning of project activities. For instance, the lack of knowledge in irrigation techniques identified by farmers can lead to designing specific training modules within the project. Additionally, collaborating with CSOs enhances representation and leverages their experience to create more effective models.

The section should also explain consultation processes during project implementation. Regular meetings and site visits with target groups and beneficiaries should be conducted to gather ongoing feedback. These consultations should detail how feedback is incorporated into project adjustments, ensuring participatory governance throughout the project lifecycle.

7.5.4. Particular Added-Value Elements

This section expects an explanation of the added-value elements created by the proposed action, with three key terms provided as examples: the promotion of public-private partnerships, innovation, and best practices. To achieve full marks, it would be appropriate to address each of these key terms and explain how the project generates added value.

Public-private partnerships refer to the collaboration fostered between public institutions and private sector entities by the proposed project. For example, in a renewable energy project, it could be highlighted that local governments will work jointly with private energy companies and exchange expertise.

Innovation reflects the innovative methods the project employs to address existing challenges faced by target groups. For instance, the use of smart farming technologies or capacity-building initiatives through digital platforms can be described as innovative approaches here.

Best Practices refer to the project drawing inspiration from previously successful implementations or the project itself becoming a model of best practice that can be scaled and replicated. For example, the project might adapt proven solutions to the target region or establish its own exemplary practices for broader application.

To confirm credibility and strengthen the case for arguments, added-value elements such as public-private partnerships, innovation, and best practices should not be presented under imaginary terms which is very much encountered in evaluations. Instead, each element must be supported by specific activities or design features within the project.

7.6. Lead Applicant

This section must be completed by the lead applicant, co-applicants, and any affiliated entities, if applicable. The information provided should align with the requirements outlined in Section 7.2 “Cover Page Information” of this Manual.

7.7. Project Details

Prior to 2025, key information about the project was presented in the “Summary of the Action” table. One of the updates introduced in 2025 is the new requirement to provide this information separately under a new section titled “Project Details.”

Table 15: Project Details (ePRAG, 2025e, p.11)			
<i>Title of the action:</i>			
<i>[Lot number you are applying to:]</i>	<i>e.g. Lot n° 2</i>		
<i>Location(s) of the action:</i>	<i>Specify country(ies), region(s), area(s) or town(s) that will benefit from the action></i>		
<i>Total duration of the action (months):</i>	<i>Months</i>		
<i>Requested EU contribution as an amount and as a percentage of the total eligible costs of the action (indicative) (only necessary where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs, entirely or partially)</i>	<i>[Reimbursement of costs]</i>	EUR <...>	<...>%
	<i>[Financing not linked to costs]</i>	EUR <...>	N/A
	<i>[Total requested EU contribution]</i>	EUR<...>	N/A
<i>Total indicative budget</i>	<EUR>		

To begin, the applicant should state the title of the project. If the call for proposals includes multiple lots, the relevant lot number and name must also be specified. The “location” field should indicate the main geographical areas where the core project activities will be implemented. For instance, if a study visit to France is planned, it does not need to be listed here. Only the locations of the project’s principal operations should be included. The total duration of the project must also be provided in months, such as “18 months.”

A new, and perhaps initially intimidating, element of the table is the budget section. However, as previously explained in the “PRAG 2025 Changes” section, the “Financing not linked to costs” modality is generally not applicable to soft projects. To assist readers, a completed example of the new table format is provided in Example 4.

Example 4: Sample Project Details			
<i>Title of the action:</i>	<i>Digital Youth Project</i>		
<i>[Lot number you are applying to:]</i>	<i>N/A</i>		
<i>Location(s) of the action:</i>	<i>Tirebolu (Giresun) / Türkiye</i>		
<i>Total duration of the action (months):</i>	<i>16 Months</i>		
<i>Requested EU contribution as an amount and as a percentage of the total eligible costs of the action (indicative) (only necessary where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs, entirely or partially)</i>	<i>[Reimbursement of costs]</i>	<i>EUR 90.000</i>	<i><90>%</i>
	<i>[Financing not linked to costs]</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
	<i>[Total requested EU contribution]</i>	<i>EUR 90.000</i>	<i>%90</i>
<i>Total indicative budget</i>	<i>EUR 100.000</i>		

7.8. Administrative Data

This section must be completed by the lead applicant, co-applicants, and by affiliated entities if there are any. The information provided should align with the requirements outlined in Section 7.2 “Cover Page Information” of this *Manual*.

7.9. Check List

This section is a final checklist that applicants must review before submitting their *concept note*. The check list consists of two parts: administrative and eligibility. The table assesses that key requirement (such as language, signature, duration, and budget limits) have been fully respected.

Important Note – 10
<i>All boxes in this section must be ticked “Yes.” If any item is marked “No,” this signals that a required element is missing. In such cases, the application should not be submitted until the issue is fully resolved, as incomplete submissions risk being declared ineligible without further evaluation.</i>

Table 16: Concept Note Checklist For Self-Guidance (ePRAG, 2025e, p.12)		
<i>Before sending your concept note, please check that each of the criteria below have been met in full and tick them off</i>	<i>Tick the items off below</i>	
<i>Title of the proposal:</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
PART 1 (ADMINISTRATIVE)		
1. <i>The instructions for the concept note have been followed.</i>	√	
2. <i>The declaration by the lead applicant has been filled in and signed.</i>	√	
3. <i>The proposal is typed and is in <English, French, Portuguese or Spanish>. Where more than one language is allowed, the proposal is drafted in the language most commonly used by the target population in the country in which the action takes place.</i>	√	
4. <i>One original and <X copy(ies)> are included.</i>	√	
5. <i>An electronic version of the concept note is enclosed.</i>	√	
PART 2 (ELIGIBILITY)		
6. <i>The action will be implemented in [an] eligible [country(ies)] [region(s)] and in the minimum required number of eligible [countries] [regions].</i>	√	
7. <i>The duration of the action is between <X months> and <X months> (the minimum and maximum allowed).</i>	√	
8. <i>The requested contribution is between the minimum and maximum allowed.</i> NB: TO BE DETERMINED	√	
9. <i>The declaration by the lead applicant has been filled in and sent with the concept note.</i>	√	

7.10. Declaration by the Lead Applicant

This section constitutes the declaration by the lead applicant at the *concept note* stage of the application. By signing, the lead applicant affirms compliance with the eligibility criteria, confirms that no false information has been provided, undertakes to implement the action directly, and commits to submitting all required documents. Misleading information may result in sanctions. Furthermore, the signatory must either be authorised to represent the organisation or be duly delegated by an authorised representative.

7.11. Assessment Grid for the Concept Note

This section includes a brief table that serves as an internal control form, used only by the Contracting Authority (applicants should not fill) to indicate the administrative compliance and evaluation status of

the application. The first row is the check on whether the submission deadline has been met, particularly in cases where paper submissions are allowed. The second row assesses whether the application meets all administrative criteria listed in the checklist. If both items are marked “YES,” the application is then considered administratively compliant, and the committee’s first decision of “The concept note has been accepted for evaluation” becomes applicable. After the evaluation, the committee then proceeds to decide whether the applicant will be invited to submit a full application.

Table 17: Assessment Grid for the Concept Note (ePRAG, 2025e, p.16)		
<i>(FOR THE USE OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY ONLY)</i>		
	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>
<i>1. For indirect management or direct management when paper submission is allowed: [The submission deadline has been met].</i>		
<i>2. The concept note satisfies all criteria specified in the checklist.</i>		
<i>Administrative compliance has been checked by:</i> <i>Date:</i>		
<i>DECISION 1: The committee has decided to evaluate the concept note, which has passed the administrative check.</i>		
<i>The concept note has been evaluated by:</i> <i>Date:</i>		
<i>DECISION 2: The committee has decided to recommend evaluation of the full application.</i>		

CHAPTER 8: FULL APPLICATION

8.1. What is a Full Application?

In the EU grant cycle, the difference between the *concept note* and the *full application* is similar to the distinction between the weigh-in and stepping onto the mat in wrestling. The *concept note*, limited to a maximum of five pages (as per the PRAG template), serves as a pre-selection tool in which the core idea, target group, and expected results are briefly presented. It is designed to allow evaluators to assess how well the proposal aligns with the objectives of the call. At that stage, no detailed budget or logical framework is required. The central question for the *concept note* is: Is the idea strategic and worth exploring further?

“Gentlemen, you had my curiosity, but now you have my attention.” (Django Unchained, 2012)

The *full application* (ePRAG, 2025e, p. 17-47), on the other hand, begins after the *concept note* passes this first screening. At this point, narrative alone is not sufficient. Applicants are required to submit a Logical Framework Matrix, a detailed timeline, risk analysis, and a fully justified, itemised budget. The logframe, in particular, functions as both a management tool and an evaluation guide by presenting the logical link between the overall objective, specific objectives, outputs, and activities. It is often one of the first documents evaluators review. At this stage, the competition becomes a marathon in which not only the idea but also the quality and coherence of documentation are assessed.

The opportunity to provide more detail in the *full application* does not mean the applicant can afford to be verbose. Evaluators follow transparent scoring grids, as outlined in the PRAG annexes, with separate weight given to design, coherence, methodology, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness. Therefore, the issues identified in the *concept note* must now be backed with activity reasoning, concrete data, stakeholder commitments, and risk mitigation strategies.

During *full application* preparation, it is highly recommended to review again the evaluation grid in the call for proposals. The narrative flow is one thing, but scoring well is another. The balance in text length across sections should be guided by the relative score assigned to each part.

In conclusion, the concept note demonstrates that the project is the right key for the lock; the *full application* is the hand that opens the door.

8.2. General information

On the first page of the full application form, a table is given which requests general information about the project. This table must be completed in accordance with the below instructions.

- Reference of the call for proposals: Enter the reference number provided in the Guidelines for Applicants. This information is typically found on the cover page of the guidelines and usually follows a format like “TR2020/DG/01/A2-01.”
- Title of the call for proposals: Insert the title of the grant scheme as stated on the cover page of the guidelines. For example, “Town Twinning between Turkey and EU-II (Twinning for a Green Future) Grant Scheme (TTGS-II).”

- **Name of the lead applicant:** Indicate the name of the main applicant institution submitting the proposal.
- **Number of the proposal:** If the call is announced as a restricted procedure, a proposal number will be assigned by the Contracting Authority during the concept note evaluation phase. This number is provided to the lead applicant upon invitation to submit the full application and must be entered here. If the call follows an open procedure requiring the concept note and full application to be submitted simultaneously, write “Not Applicable (N/A)” in this field.
- **Title of the action:** Enter the title of the proposed project exactly as it appears in the concept note.
- **Location of the action:** Indicate the implementation location of the proposed project, matching the information provided in the concept note.
- **Duration of the action:** State the implementation period of the project, as previously declared in the concept note.
- **Number of the lot:** If the call includes multiple lots under the “Financial Allocation” section (each representing a different type of project) specify the relevant lot number here. If no separate lots are defined, write “Not Applicable (N/A).”

8.3. Description

Under the “2.1.1. Description” section of the *full application* form, applicants are allocated 18 pages (which used to be 13 in before PRAG 2025 revisions). In this section, particular emphasis should be placed on explaining the activities in detail and justifying the backbone of the project. As specified in the “e3b – Application Form,” the presentation of the project proposal in this section follows a specific structure. Moreover, what needs to be addressed and the tables that must be completed are provided within an extensive narrative, while the writing approach is generally left to the discretion of the applicant organisation within the established guidelines.

Table 18: Suggested Allocation of Pages for “Description” Section		
<i>Headings</i>		<i>Number of pages</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Conceptual Background</i>	<i>1</i>
	<i>Context and Location</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Main Studies Conducted</i>	<i>Relevance of the action</i>	<i>1</i>
	<i>Target groups and final beneficiaries</i>	<i>1</i>
	<i>Intervention logic</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>From Activities to Outputs</i>	<i>Elaborating “IF, AND, THEN” approach</i>	<i>0,5</i>
	<i>Description of each activity in in detail (including output table)</i>	<i>10</i>
	<i>Indicator description</i>	<i>0,5</i>
<i>From Outputs to Outcomes</i>	<i>Elaborating “IF, AND, THEN, BECAUSE” approach</i>	<i>0,5</i>
	<i>Outcome table (including indicators)</i>	<i>0,5</i>
<i>From Outcomes to Impact</i>	<i>Elaborating “IF, AND, THEN, BECAUSE” approach</i>	<i>0,5</i>
	<i>Impact table (including indicators)</i>	<i>0,5</i>
<i>Total number of pages</i>		<i>18</i>

In this chapter of the *Manual*, the general narrative required under the “2.1.1. Description” heading will be broken down into sub-sections to provide a suitable writing framework for project applicants. A practical example of this writing framework is also provided through the sample project application included in the annex of this *Manual*.

The subheadings “Conceptual Background” and “Context and Location” in Table 18 are not stated in the standard PRAG *full application* form template. However, with the 2025 PRAG revision, the page limit for this section has been extended from 13 to 18 pages which allows more room for detailed content. In this context, the proposal may begin with a simplified narrative under the “Theoretical Background” subheading, offering a brief explanation of the topic the project addresses. As previously noted, evaluators cannot be expected to be experts in every field. Therefore, if the project aims to produce fertilizer from organic waste, a short overview of the environmental and economic relevance of this method may be provided. Similarly, if the project focuses on eco-tourism, the basic principles of this tourism type and its connection to sustainable development may be outlined.

The following “Context and Location” section can provide a comprehensive overview of the area where the project will be implemented, and all other relevant information that applicant desires to share to evaluators. While such details were briefly mentioned in the *concept note* stage, they should now be expanded to state which town, district, or region the project will take place in. Key demographic characteristics, social structure, economic activities, accessibility, natural resources, and institutional capacity of the location should be described in a coherent narrative. This section should present factual information and also demonstrate the connection between the project’s objectives and the local context.

8.3.1. Relevance and Context Analysis

As indicated in the table, it would be appropriate to dedicate the first page of the Description section to answering the questions listed under the heading “main studies conducted.” The writing approach for this section should be revised in line with the guidance provided in the *concept note* chapter of this *Manual*. However, since more space is available in this section, it is advisable to present the analyses in greater detail and with more data. Moreover, as emphasised in the *concept note* chapter, it should not be overlooked that the questions provided in the application form contain multiple sub-questions, all of which must be addressed individually.

Table 19: Relevance Question Breakdown Table	
Original Instruction	Question Breakdown
Briefly outline the relevance of the action to the objectives/sectors/themes/specific priorities of the call for proposals and to the particular needs and constraints of the target country/countries, region(s) (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the relevance of the action to the objectives of the call for proposals? 2. What is the relevance of the action to the sectors/themes/specific priorities of the call for proposals? 3. How does the action address the particular needs and constraints of the target country/countries or region(s)? 4. How does the action ensure synergy with other development initiatives and avoid duplication?

8.3.2. Target Groups and Final Beneficiaries

This section of the full application form requests the same information on target group analysis as was required in the *concept note*. Therefore, when drafting this section, the information used in the *concept note* can be reused, perhaps with some additional detail and elaboration.

Compared to the *concept note*, however, in the *full application* document, there is one additional question which requires applicants to evaluate and explain the technical and managerial capacities of the target groups, local co-applicants, and/or affiliated entities. The goal is to clearly demonstrate the ability of these groups or organisations to implement the project and their contributions. For example, if a local municipality is the main applicant, its prior experience with similar projects, existing human resources, technical equipment, and administrative processes should be detailed. If an NGO is a co-beneficiary, the projects it has undertaken in the relevant area, and its technical and management capacities should be highlighted. Regarding the target groups, such as farmers, their current level of knowledge or skills needed in the field can be explained, such as existing agricultural methods, tools used, or missing competencies. These descriptions will be used to demonstrate the readiness and strengths of the implementing entities, enhancing the perceived feasibility of the action.

Important Note – 11
Integrating specific studies (such as institutional reports, academic articles, or books) that were consulted during the development of the project idea into both the “Relevance and Context Analysis” and the “Target Groups and Final Beneficiaries” sections is essential. Doing so reinforces the argument that the project concept is grounded in scientific evidence, thereby strengthening its credibility and rationale.

8.3.3. Intervention Logic

In the concept note phase, the previously addressed “intervention logic” section now requires a broader approach. While a single-paragraph Theory of Change narrative was previously recommended in the concept note to save space, the *full application* stage allows for a longer intervention logic narrative of approximately one page. Therefore, instead of limiting the response to a brief Theory of Change paragraph, applicants should adopt a similarly structured but more comprehensive approach in this section.

“The Intervention Logic is detailed and structured narrative that explains how, in the given context, the outputs will lead to the outcome(s), and the outcome(s) to the expected impact. It describes the vertical logic of the Logical Framework Matrix by articulating the results chain and the assumptions” (EC, 2025i)

The intervention logic section in the application form requires applicants to present their project ideas not only in terms of general objectives and goals but also by clearly articulating the causal relationship between outputs, outcomes, and impact. This section is based on the “vertical logic” of the Logical Framework Matrix (Annex e3d), further reinforcing the earlier point that it is more effective to begin drafting the *full application* with the logical framework and budget.

Intervention logic must be explained through a chain that moves from activities to outputs, from outputs to outcomes, and from outcomes to impact. Therefore, the applicant should begin by briefly and clearly defining the activities to be implemented, then explain which outputs these activities will produce, how these outputs will lead to specific outcomes, and finally, what broader impact is expected to emerge.

Example 5: Intervention Logic Narrative

The intervention logic of this action is built on a clear, step-by-step progression from activities to impact, following the structure of the Logical Framework Matrix. At its core, the action seeks to strengthen public safety and resilience by enhancing the emergency response capabilities of local firefighting units. This will be achieved through a structured process that begins with the design and implementation of a certified training program.

The first phase of the intervention involves the development of an EU-certified emergency response training curriculum. This curriculum will be created in collaboration with a recognised European training institution and will reflect operational standards widely adopted across EU member states. Once developed and approved, the curriculum will be used to deliver a 5-day simulation-based training program to 50 firefighters at a designated local training facility.

Following the training, participants will undergo a final written and practical assessment to evaluate their competencies. Those who successfully complete the program will receive formal EU-certified emergency response certificates. These certificates serve as verification that the firefighters are equipped with updated knowledge and skills, enabling them to respond to emergencies in a more coordinated, safe, and timely manner.

The completion of training and certification is expected to result in improved operational performance. Specifically, trained firefighters are anticipated to show increased preparedness, faster decision-making, and better adherence to safety protocols during emergency interventions. This outcome will be measured through standardised simulation assessments, in which at least 80% of the trained participants are expected to score above 75%.

In the long term, the outcome of improved emergency response capacity will contribute to a significant impact: a measurable reduction in emergency response times and increased public trust in firefighting services. The target is a 15% decrease in average response times in intervention areas by the end of 2028, verified through local firefighting statistics and independent evaluation reports.

For the intervention logic to be convincing and effective, applicants must thoroughly analyse the project context, construct the activity–result–impact chain using concrete examples, and state the assumptions behind each step. This narrative is critical, as it demonstrates why the project is logical and feasible and will be highlighted by evaluators. Additionally, applicants should support their descriptions with indicators to show that they are presenting not merely an idea, but a well-structured intervention plan.

Important Note – 12

In the concept note stage, this section is written together with the risk analysis. However, in the full application stage, risk elements should not be included in this section. Instead, a detailed risk analysis will be conducted by the applicant in a later part of the application.

8.3.4. From Activities to Outputs

In this section of the project narrative, it is first necessary to present the Theory of Change approach as requested in the application form. The form requires that activities be listed using an “IF” structure; assumptions be introduced with an “AND” statement; and that it be argued that outputs will be achieved through a “THEN” statement.

“Output(s): As per OECD-DAC definition; The products, capital goods and services which result from the implementation of the Action activities.” (ePRAG, 2025f, p. 14)

In the example provided by the European Commission within the application form, the relationship between all activities and outputs is presented in a single Theory of Change narrative. However, in project writing, the golden rule is to explain the project in a way that evaluators can easily understand and grasp. For this reason, a more appropriate approach would be to draft a separate Theory of Change for each output.

Due to the reasons explained above, the section should begin with a brief introduction explaining the project’s activity clusters. Then, all activities should be structured in a table format and grouped with the corresponding outputs, as illustrated in the example table. Afterward, starting with the first output, a Theory of Change should be written specifically for that output. Subsequently, the sub-activities related to the output should be described along with their corresponding indicators, and any materials to be published should be noted. Finally, the output table specified in the application form should be completed.

Table 20: Sample Activity Cluster			
IMPACT			
Outcome 1		Outcome 2	
Output – 1.1	Output – 1.2	Output – 2.1.	Output – 2.2.
Activity 1.1.1	Activity 1.2.1	Activity 2.1.1	Activity 2.2.1
Activity 1.1.2	Activity 1.2.2	Activity 2.1.2	Activity 2.2.2
Activity 1.1.3.	Activity 1.2.3.	Activity 2.1.3.	Activity 2.2.3.

Following the development of the table above, the next step involves explaining the outputs step by step using the Theory of Change and detailing the underlying activities. This narrative method is used to clearly and systematically demonstrate the cause-and-effect relationship within projects. The system sets out which outputs will be achieved if the activities are carried out and the given assumptions hold true. Through this narrative structure, the project idea is presented to the evaluator through a clear chain of logic without the need for complex explanations. Indeed, this method serves not only the evaluators but also functions as a self-assessment process for project developers. Moreover, this approach facilitates monitoring and evaluation processes within the project, as it provides information on the purpose of each step, the conditions under which it occurs, and the outputs it generates.

Example 6: Output Based Theory of Change
<i>IF a certified 5-day training curriculum is developed in collaboration with an accredited European institution, the training is delivered in a properly equipped local centre, and all participants complete a final assessment, AND the assumptions, such as the availability of qualified trainers, active participation of firefighters, and uninterrupted access to training facilities, hold true, THEN 50 firefighters will successfully complete the program and receive EU-certified emergency response training certificates.</i>

Following the narrative example provided above, a detailed explanation of the activities listed under the relevant output should be presented in detail.

A project activity is a set of tasks related to a process or component, planned to be completed within a specific timeframe, with measurable outputs. In projects, activities are designed to be interconnected to achieve overall objectives, and their outputs contribute concretely to project progress. Based on this definition, applicants must define and detail activities accurately.

“An activity is a set of tasks/work belonging to a process/work package in a project, with measurable outputs and limited duration.” (PM², p.122)

Applicants should elaborate on the activities mentioned in the *concept note* under the relevant components. A component consists of activities designed to achieve a general objective and includes interrelated tasks aligned with that goal. These components, as outlined earlier in Table 20, can be constructed based on thematic or flow-based activity grouping.

For example, a component titled “Capacity Building for Local Governments” may aim to enhance the technical expertise of local governments on a specific topic. This component could include training programs, technical support efforts, and awareness-raising seminars. The general description of each component should include explanations of its objectives, overall outputs, and scope.

Table 21: 5W1H Model for Activity Description		
<i>What</i>	<i>Scope of the activity</i>	<i>Clearly state the topic of the activity, reflecting its duration, and number of participants in a concise and descriptive way.</i>
<i>Why</i>	<i>Objective of the activity</i>	<i>Explain the intended result or goal of the activity, showing how it contributes to broader project aims or expected outcomes.</i>
<i>Where</i>	<i>Location of the activity</i>	<i>Specify the geographic or institutional setting where the activity will take place, including region, city, organisation, or online platform if applicable.</i>
<i>When</i>	<i>Timing of the activity</i>	<i>Indicate when the activity will be carried out, including specific dates, duration, or phases within the overall project timeline.</i>
<i>Who</i>	<i>Roles and responsibilities</i>	<i>List who will be involved and what they will do—include implementing bodies, coordinators, partners, or experts with defined duties.</i>
<i>How</i>	<i>Methodology of the activity</i>	<i>Describe how the activity will be implemented, including tools, processes, approaches, and any standards or guidelines to be followed.</i>

After the general introduction of the component, each activity should be specifically detailed. 5W1H (What, Why, Where, When, Who and How) is a question-based approach that enables a holistic analysis of an issue. This method is especially used in journalism to explain a complex event to the public in a simple way. Therefore, it can also be used by project developers to write down an activity they have in mind in a way that everyone can understand. When the 5W1H model is adapted to activity description, it becomes easier to express the scope of the activity (what), its objective (why), the location of implementation (where), its timing (when), the distribution of responsibilities (who), and the way it will be carried out (how).

Example 7: Activity Description in Detail**Activity 1.1 – Development of Emergency Response Training Curriculum in EU Standards**

The scope of the activity is to develop an EU-standard curriculum to design the training. The objective of the activity is to develop a structured emergency response training curriculum aligned with EU standards, tailored to the needs of local firefighting units. By harmonising with European safety protocols, the activity strengthens local emergency response capacities and contributes to broader public safety. The location of the activity will primarily be in Skopje, where coordination meetings and validation workshops will take place. Inputs from European experts and partner institutions will also be gathered remotely. The timing of the activity spans from Month 1 to Month 5 of the project implementation. Regarding roles and responsibilities, the municipality will lead the overall process, ensuring coordination and alignment with local needs. The Green Future NGO will support the development phase, with volunteer firefighters actively participating in the design workshops to contribute practical insights and field experience. The methodology of the activity will be based on a consultative and collaborative approach, supported by technical desk study and structured curriculum development practices. The process will begin with a comprehensive desk review of existing training models and emergency response frameworks at both EU and international levels. This will include the analysis of example curricula, training modules, and case studies from comparable municipalities to identify good practices and applicable formats. A context-specific needs assessment will follow, incorporating online and in-person surveys, interviews with frontline responders, and consultations with municipal safety officials. Based on the collected data, a draft curriculum will be developed using a modular and competency-based structure which ensures adaptability to various local contexts and risk scenarios. The design will integrate adult learning principles and scenario-based learning methods. Peer reviews by academic experts and validation by a certified European training institution will be conducted to ensure alignment with EU standards. Gender equality and inclusion will be mainstreamed in course materials, visuals, and case scenarios.

The guideline requires applicants to describe each activity in detail, including an explanation of the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. This includes, where applicable, co-applicants, affiliated entities, associates, contractors, and where relevant, recipients of financial support. Within the activity description, specifying who will do what gives the evaluator an understanding of how responsibilities are divided and how each partner contributes meaningfully to the implementation of the Action.

“The acronym RASCI (pronounced rasky) stands for: Responsible, Accountable, Supports, Consulted, and Informed. It is also known as the Responsibility Matrix.” (PM², p. 136)

The PM² methodology offers the RASCI table as a practical tool to meet this requirement. The RASCI table defines who is Responsible, Accountable, Supports, Consulted, and Informed for each activity. By using a RASCI table, applicants can present a structured overview of partner roles, facilitate coordination and demonstrate a well-organised approach for the implementation.

Example 8: Sample Activity Output and RASCI Table

Assumptions	All participants showed interest and actively followed the training.			
Inputs	Training Expert (6 days x 300€) + Event Cost (7800€)			
Deliverables	50 certifications; 1 training report			
R	A	S	C	I
PM (Lead)	Lead	Co	Stakeholders	Cont. Aut.

The level of detail in activity descriptions can be adjusted based on the number of activities included in the project proposal. However, it is essential to ensure that the content is clear and comprehensive, so that evaluator can thoroughly understand the project. Many applicants struggle to expand upon the logical activities they defined during the concept note phase when they reach the *full application* stage. Therefore, applicants should plan activities with concrete and measurable outputs while ensuring alignment with the overall project objectives.

Example 9: Output Table	
<i>OUTPUTS</i>	
<i>Output 1: 50 firefighters receive EU-certified emergency response training certificates</i>	
<i>Indicator 1 to output 1</i>	<i>EU-certified emergency response training curriculum developed and approved</i>
<i>Indicator 1 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u></i>	<i>1 approved curriculum by 2026</i>
<i>Sources of data for the values of the indicator</i>	<i>Signed curriculum approval document; Collaboration agreement with accredited training institution; Final version of the curriculum with validation records</i>
<i>Indicator 2 to output 1</i>	<i>Number of firefighters who completed the EU-certified training</i>
<i>Indicator 2 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u></i>	<i>50 by 2026</i>
<i>Source of data for the values of the indicator</i>	<i>Signed attendance sheets; Training completion lists from the accredited institution; Final assessment records</i>

In the table above, the output is structured with two indicators to enable tracking of both the preparatory process and the final impact. The first indicator focuses on the development and approval of the training curriculum, which forms the foundation of the training. This indicator essentially serves as an input to the second one. The second indicator measures the number of firefighters who successfully complete the training and receive certification. Through this indicator, both content production and implementation success can be monitored. Each indicator includes a target year and reliable data sources. The resulting table presents a comprehensive view of planning, implementation, and evaluation dimensions of the output.

Important Note – 13
<i>The outputs and indicators presented in this section of the application must fully align with those listed in the Logical Framework Matrix (Logframe).</i>

8.3.5. From Outputs to Outcomes

In this section of the application form, a similar logical map must be developed, showing how clearly defined outputs resulting from the activities may lead to medium-term effects, also known as, outcomes.

“The outcomes are the mid-term expected effects of the action fulfilling the specific objective(s)” (ePRAG, 2025e, p. 21). ”

Similar to the previous section, applicants are expected to use a Theory of Change approach to explain, through a logical chain, which outcomes will be achieved if the outputs are delivered and the assumptions at the output level hold true. The narrative should begin with “IF” to define the outputs, continue with “AND” to describe the relevant assumptions, proceed with “THEN” to express the expected outcome, and conclude with “BECAUSE” to explain why this outcome is achievable. This explanation should be supported by evidence, previous experience, or existing data from similar practices. In doing so, the medium-term impact of the project is presented in a realistic, logical, and convincing manner.

Example 10: Outcome Based Theory of Change
<i>IF the EU-certified emergency response training curriculum is developed and approved, and 50 firefighters successfully complete the training and receive certificates as planned, AND the assumptions outlined in the Logframe at the output level, such as sustained institutional support, availability of simulation infrastructure, and continued motivation of trainees hold true, THEN the emergency response capacity and operational standardisation among local firefighting units will improve, leading to quicker, safer, and more coordinated interventions aligned with EU-level protocols, BECAUSE similar certified training programs implemented across other EU countries have shown measurable improvements in emergency response performance, particularly when curricula are standardised and supported by practical assessments. Past evaluations have confirmed that certified training combined with realistic simulations leads to increased preparedness and better teamwork under pressure.</i>

In the example above, a sample Theory of Change narrative has been developed in line with the structure requested in the application form. The narrative begins with the output “50 firefighters receive EU-certified emergency response training.” It then states that if this output is delivered and the assumptions at the output level hold true, a result such as “enhanced emergency response capacity and more rapid and coordinated interventions in line with EU standards” can be achieved. As justification for why this outcome is feasible, the narrative refers to evidence from EU countries where similar training programs have been implemented, showing a noticeable decrease in response times and improved adherence to safety standards among firefighting teams. This structure provides a clear and convincing presentation of both the project’s feasibility and its medium-term impact.

Example 11: Outcome Table	
OUTCOMES	
<i>Outcome 1: Improved emergency response capacity and standardisation among local firefighting units, enabling quicker, safer, and more coordinated interventions in line with EU-level operational protocols.</i>	
<i><u>Indicator 1</u> to output 1</i>	<i>Percentage of trained firefighters who demonstrate improved response performance in standardised emergency simulations.</i>
<i><u>Indicator 1 target</u> with <u>year</u></i>	<i>80% of certified firefighters score above 75% in post-training emergency response simulation assessments by Q1 2027.</i>
<i>Sources of data for the values of the indicator</i>	<i>Simulation performance reports; assessment scoring sheets; post-training evaluation summaries by supervisors</i>

Once the Theory of Change narrative is completed, the application form requires that outcomes be directly measured by one or more indicators, and that these indicators be described. Additionally, applicants are expected to explain how data related to the indicators will be collected and what kind of evidence will be provided. Instead of writing this information separately, it is sufficient to fill in the Outcome Table included in the application form. Furthermore, as explained in the previous section, if there is more than one outcome, a separate Theory of Change narrative and a corresponding table should be created for each outcome. This approach will facilitate the evaluator’s understanding of the project idea. An example of this narrative method can be found in the sample proposal included in the annex of this *Manual*.

Important Note – 14
<i>The outcome and indicators presented in this section of the application must fully align with those listed in the Logical Framework Matrix (Logframe).</i>

8.3.6. From Outcomes to Impact

Impact refers to the long-term change expected to occur as a result of achieving a project’s overall objective. The activities implemented within the project generate specific outputs, which over time evolve into medium-term outcomes. As these outcomes are sustainably embedded, they lead to meaningful change at the societal or systemic level. Therefore, impacts serve as the most important tool to assess the extent to which the ultimate goals of the project have been achieved.

“The impact is the long-term expected effect of the action fulfilling the overall objective.” (ePRAG, 2025e, p. 22).”

As in the previous section (from outputs to outcome), a Theory of Change must also be written here using the same method, this time from outcomes to impact, reflecting the project’s overall objective. In this narrative, the process flow using IF, AND, THEN, and BECAUSE must be applied, and it is expected that past experiences be cited to justify that the system is logically and effectively structured.

Example 12: Impact Based Theory of Change
<i>IF the outcome of “improved emergency response capacity and standardisation among local firefighting units” is achieved, AND the assumptions of continued institutional support, no major staffing shortages, sustained access to equipment, described in the Logframe at the outcome level hold true, THEN the Action will contribute to the desired impact, which is strengthened public safety and resilience through enhanced firefighting response capabilities aligned with EU operational standards, including a 15% reduction in average emergency response time. This is BECAUSE evidence from similar EU-funded programs in other Member States has shown that standardised and certified training directly leads to faster and safer responses during emergencies. Post-intervention evaluations in those cases reported significant reductions in emergency response times and improved coordination among firefighting teams, suggesting that such a change is both realistic and replicable under similar conditions.</i>

In the example above, a sample Theory of Change narrative has been developed at the impact level in line with the structure required by the application form. The narrative begins with the outcome: “enhanced emergency response capacity and faster, more coordinated interventions in line with EU standards.” It then states that, if this outcome is achieved and the assumptions at the outcome level hold true, an impact such as “strengthened public safety and increased societal resilience to disasters” can be expected. The justification for why this impact is attainable refers to evidence from regions in Europe where similar programs have been implemented, showing that in areas where certified firefighters were deployed, emergency response times decreased by 15%. This improvement led to enhanced public safety and a reduction in casualties. Thus, the long-term impact of the project is presented in a realistic and evidence-based manner.

Example 13: Impact Table	
<i>IMPACT</i>	
<i>Impact: Strengthened public safety and resilience through enhanced firefighting response capabilities aligned with EU operational standards.</i>	
<i>Indicator 1 to impact</i>	<i>Reduction in average emergency response time in intervention areas.</i>
<i>Indicator 1 target with year</i>	<i>15% reduction in average emergency response time by 2028.</i>
<i>Sources of data for the values of the indicator</i>	<i>Official emergency response time statistics from local firefighting authorities; Annual public safety reports; Independent evaluation reports comparing pre- and post-intervention response times</i>

Following the impact-based Theory of Change, the impact table must also be completed as specified in the application form.

Important Note – 15
<i>The impact and indicators presented in this section of the application must fully align with those listed in the Logical Framework Matrix (Logframe).</i>

8.3.7. Financial Support to Third Parties

Financial support to third parties is the provision of financial assistance by the main beneficiary of an EU project to individuals or entities that are not officially part of the project but contribute to its objectives. This support can be offered in the form of scholarships, awards, micro-grants, or small-scale funding. The aim is to broaden the project’s impact and encourage the participation of smaller actors, such as NGOs, start-ups, or young researchers. For example, within a digital innovation project, a university acting as the main beneficiary may provide financial support of up to €10,000 to young entrepreneurs for prototype development. This mechanism is also known as “cascade funding” and is a widely used and effective tool in EU-funded projects.

If financial support is provided to third parties within the project (if permitted by the call for proposals), this process must be detailed under this section. For example, if microcredits are provided to women entrepreneurs, applicants should clearly define the general and specific objectives (e.g.,

promoting women's entrepreneurship, supporting women-led businesses), expected outputs (e.g., providing credit to 50 women), eligible activities (e.g., seed capital, business expansion), eligible applicants (e.g., local women entrepreneurs presenting business plans), and criteria for determining financial amounts (e.g., maximum €5,000). The selection process should be transparent and based on clear criteria. Additionally, Article 2.4 of the PRAG outlines compliance with the EU restrictive measures with accountability being emphasised in the distribution and use of funds.

8.3.8. Eventual Changes

In restricted calls, where the application process involves first submitting a *concept note* followed by a *full application*, the evaluation period can be lengthy. As a result, there may sometimes be differences between the initial *concept note* and the final *full application* submitted at a later stage.

This section should explain any potential changes between the information provided in the *concept note* and the details in the project proposal. Changes may occur in areas such as scope, target groups, activities, or budget. However, such changes should be justified as arising from events beyond the applicant's control. Avoid changes such as miscalculations or incorrect target group selection leading to a revised target group during the full application stage. Each change must be explained in detail, including the reasons for the revision and why the project was adjusted in this manner.

Important Note – 16
<i>The requested EU contribution in the full application must not differ by more than 20% from the amount initially requested in the concept note stage. Exceeding this limit may result in the application being deemed ineligible.</i>

8.4. Implementation Approach

Under the section titled "Implementation Approach," applicants are required to provide detailed information on how the proposed project will be carried out. This includes the methods to be used, the organisational structure, the roles of stakeholders, as well as the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and the visibility and communication activities. In addition, elements such as links to previous projects and alignment with the wider programme should also be addressed. The main purpose of this section is to clearly and convincingly demonstrate the feasibility and potential impact of the project.

Table 22: Suggested Design for the Implementation Approach Section		
<i>Request of the Application Form</i>	<i>Suggested Shortened Headings</i>	<i>Number of pages</i>
<i>the methods of implementation (including the main inputs proposed – e.g. equipment, materials, and supplies to be acquired or rented) and rationale for such methodology;</i>	<i>Implementation Methods and Inputs</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>where the action is meant to prolong the effects of a previous action, describe how the action is intended to build on the results achieved by the previous action (give the main conclusions-highlighting and recommendations of any evaluations carried out);</i>	<i>Building on Previous Actions</i>	<i>0,25</i>
<i>where the action is part of a larger programme, explain how it fits or is coordinated within the programme (please specify potential synergies with other initiatives, in particular by the European Union);</i>	<i>Integration into Wider Programme</i>	<i>0,25</i>
<i>the organisational structure and the team proposed for the implementation of the action (by function – please do not provide the names of individuals);</i>	<i>Organisational Structure and Team</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>the role and participation in the action of the various actors and stakeholders (co-applicant(s), affiliated entity(ies), target groups, local authorities, etc.), and the reasons why these roles have been assigned to them;</i>	<i>Stakeholders and Assigned Roles</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>the planned monitoring arrangements and subsequent follow up;</i>	<i>Monitoring and Follow-Up</i>	<i>0,5</i>
<i>the planned internal/external evaluation processes (an evaluation should be foreseen for actions above EUR 500 000, and is highly recommended for actions below this amount);</i>	<i>Evaluation Processes Planned</i>	<i>0,5</i>
<i>the planned activities in order to ensure the visibility of the EU's financial contribution to the action and, if requested by the European Commission in the call for proposals, communication activities;</i>	<i>Visibility and Communication Activities</i>	<i>0,5</i>

8.4.1. Methods of Implementation

This section must detail the methods to be used in the project's implementation. These methods should explain how planned activities will be executed to achieve project objectives and why they were designed in this manner. Additionally, the main tools, equipment, materials, and services required during the project must be specified, along with their justifications.

First, the methods to be applied should be defined. For instance, in a capacity-building project, methods such as preparing training modules, organising workshops, or utilising digital platforms can be described. It is essential to explain how these methods address the needs of the target groups and contribute to the overall project objectives. For example, "An online training platform will be used to improve the digital literacy of target groups; this method provides broad access at a low cost" can be a good way to express the method of an activity.

Information on tools, equipment, and materials to be used should also be provided. For instance, in training projects, items like computers, software, printed materials, or, in infrastructure projects, construction materials and technical devices should be listed. The explanation should include how

these resources will be acquired (purchase, rental, or donation) and why they were chosen. For example, “Portable projectors will be purchased for training sessions to ensure logistical flexibility for events in various regions” is a meaningful expression to describe the portable projector which is being purchased for the action.

The rationale for selecting these methods should also explain why they are the most effective options and how they enhance the project’s cost-effectiveness. For instance, using locally sourced materials could reduce logistical costs while supporting local economies in terms of sustainability.

If the project involves high-cost equipment crucial to its success, this section should extensively justify why it is necessary and how the project’s success depends on acquiring this equipment.

Finally, it can be stated that the project will be managed using the PM² methodology. As mentioned earlier, PM² is specifically designed for EU projects and provides an effective guide for planning, executing, monitoring, and concluding projects. Project developers should explain how this structured approach improves process traceability and communication among stakeholders. Narrative can also highlight the use of tools like the RASCI table or organisational structures within PM².

8.4.2. Building on Previous Actions

The narrative provided in the *concept note* can be reused here.

8.4.3. Integration into Wider Programme

The narrative provided in the *concept note* can be reused here.

8.4.4. Organisational Structure and the Team Proposed

Under this heading, the organisational structure and team proposed for project implementation should be detailed. At this stage, providing specific names is unnecessary; instead, roles and titles should be defined. A structure based on the organisational layers and roles of the PM² methodology can be developed. A clear structure ensures the effective fulfilment of responsibilities at different levels, offering clear task distribution from strategic vision to daily management and field operations.

Table 23: PM² Layers and Roles	
<i>Business Governing Layer</i>	<i>determines the vision and strategy for the organisation as a whole.</i>
<i>Steering Layer</i>	<i>provides general project direction and guidance.</i>
<i>Directing Layer</i>	<i>champions the project and owns its Business Case.</i>
<i>Managing Layer</i>	<i>focuses on day-to-day project management.</i>
<i>Performing Layer</i>	<i>carries out the project work.</i>

For example, in a European Union project with the goal of “local economic development,” jointly developed by a municipality (lead-applicant) and a civil society organisation (co-applicant), the organisational layers can be structured as follows:

- **Business Governing Layer:** This layer sets the overall vision and strategy for the project, usually represented by the upper management or leadership of the organisations. This layer ensures that the project's direction aligns with the strategic goals of the institutions. In the given example, this layer is represented by the mayor of the municipality and the CSO's chair.
- **Steering Layer:** Providing overall guidance and strategic direction for the project, this layer plays a key role in decision-making processes. A steering committee or a similar structure assumes this responsibility. This layer oversees project progress and offers direction for significant decisions. In the given example, the project steering committee fulfils this role.
- **Directing Layer:** This layer assumes ownership of the project's business model, advocating for the project's overall interests. Project sponsors typically occupy this layer and guarantee the provision of necessary resources for project success. In the given example, the Contracting Authority managing the EU funding represents this layer.
- **Managing Layer:** Responsible for daily project management, this layer ensures project planning, coordination, and control. The project manager leads this layer, fostering effective collaboration among team members. In the given example, the project manager representing the municipality and the CSO project representative make up this layer.
- **Performing Layer:** Team members conducting project activities are in this layer. Technical experts, field staff, and other implementers contribute to producing project outputs. All personnel working on the project team belong to this layer.

The organisational structure outlined above facilitates effective project implementation within the PM² methodology by clearly defining roles and responsibilities at each layer.

After defining the layers and roles, it is crucial to elaborate on the Project Steering Committee (Steering Committee), a key element of the project. The Steering Committee is a structure comprising stakeholder representatives that plays a pivotal role in providing strategic direction, monitoring progress, and making key decisions. Its purpose is to ensure that the project progresses in line with its objectives, evaluate critical decisions, and strengthen coordination among key stakeholders.

"The Project Steering Committee (PSC) is responsible for monitoring the correct execution of the project. This group defines the main orientations of the project and coordinates its main tasks." (PM², p. 35)

When constructing an effective steering committee for a European Union project with the goal of "local economic development," jointly developed by a municipality and a civil society organisation (CSO), the following aspects should be carefully considered:

- **Representation and Participation:** The committee members should represent the key stakeholders of the project and possess relevant experience. Balanced representation of the municipality, CSO, contracting authority, and other relevant parties is essential.
- **Expertise:** Committee members must have knowledge of the project's sector. They should have expertise in areas such as local economic development, project management, and financing to effectively contribute to discussions and decisions.

- **Authority and Roles:** The responsibilities of the committee, as well as the roles and authority of its members, should be clearly defined. For example, it should be clear to everyone who holds decision-making authority, which issues fall under the committee's responsibility, and whether decisions are taken by simple majority or a two-thirds majority.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** The committee should meet regularly, document its decisions, and report these to stakeholders which in this way transparency will be ensured and trust among all involved parties will be established.

After defining the organisational layers and detailing the steering committee, the project management team must also be explained. In PM² methodology, the project team is defined under the framework of the Project Core Team (PCT).

"The Project Core Team (PCT) comprises the specialist roles responsible for creating the project deliverables. Its composition and structure depend on the project size and type (e.g. IT project, policy development project, etc.) and is defined by the Project Manager (PM) based on the project's needs." (PM², p.133)

The Project Core Team (PCT), coordinated by the Project Manager (PM), undertakes critical responsibilities such as defining the project scope, executing tasks in alignment with the Project Work Plan, and delivering outputs. PCT also regularly informs the PM about progress, resolves issues, and participates in project-end review meetings for lessons learned. Once the roles and responsibilities of the team are outlined, the titles of team members should be tailored to the specific project and include fundamental tasks, authorities, and responsibilities.

The number of PCT members varies depending on the project budget. For smaller projects with a budget under €100,000, a single Project Manager can suffice as the PCT, as PM² methodology allows for this flexibility. For a larger project, such as one with a €500,000 budget aiming for "local economic development" under a partnership between a municipality and an CSO, a PCT with four members could be structured as follows:

- **Project Manager:** As the leader, the Project Manager oversees overall project execution, ensures milestones are achieved on time, and coordinates communication with the Steering Committee and stakeholders. This role requires expertise in economic development, strong organisational and leadership skills, and effective problem-solving abilities.
- **Project Assistant:** Supporting the Project Manager with administrative duties, the Project Assistant manages schedules, ensures documentation is up to date, and facilitates operational tasks. This role demands multitasking skills, attention to detail, and effective communication.
- **Accounting Officer:** Responsible for financial management, ensuring compliance with EU financial regulations. Tasks include budget preparation, expense monitoring, and preparing financial reports. This role requires expertise in financial planning, accuracy, and a solid understanding of EU funding rules.
- **Visibility and Event Manager:** Oversees visibility and promotional activities, coordinates events, and develops promotional materials. Creativity, expertise in communication strategies, event planning skills, and familiarity with EU visibility requirements are essential for this role to create awareness and compliance.

To further enhance the application and maximise scoring potential, the Project Support Team (PST), a structure in PM² methodology, can be incorporated. The PST provides supplementary support in administrative, technical, or operational aspects, ensuring seamless project execution and adherence to best practices.

“The Project Support Team (PST) is an optional role that consists of the people responsible for providing support to the project. PST is often composed of representatives from various horizontal services or units.”
(PM², p. 135).

The Project Support Team consists of individuals who provide assistance to the overall administration and achievement of project goals. In the example of a “local economic development” project, the PCT would include a project manager and relevant specialists. While the project may be managed by the municipality’s EU Project Directorate, other departments such as the infrastructure directorate, promotion office, or agriculture office can also contribute as part of the PST. Similarly, technical representatives from institutions and organisations not directly involved in the project can participate in project management meetings. Therefore, while explaining the project management structure, it would be helpful to state that a Project Support Team will be established, ensuring the efficient and effective progress of project activities.

8.4.5. Roles and Participation of Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders are individuals, institutions, or groups (or their representatives) who either have a direct influence on the success of a project, play a role in decision-making processes, or are significantly affected by the project. These typically include public institutions, local authorities, civil society organisations, private sector actors, or opinion leaders within the target group. Involving them early in the process increases ownership and helps mitigate risks during implementation. Key stakeholders are the critical actors, influencing the direction and impact of a project.

This section should provide a detailed explanation of the roles and participation of various actors (co-applicants, affiliated entities, target groups, local authorities, etc.) and stakeholders involved in the action. It is essential to justify why each actor or stakeholder has been assigned a particular role and how their participation will contribute to the project.

For instance, co-applicants should be chosen based on their technical expertise or strong presence in the field, and this rationale should be clearly stated. Similarly, if affiliated entities are involved, their role in supporting or complementing specific activities must be explained.

The involvement of target groups should be emphasised to ensure that project outputs align with their needs and are sustainable. The proposal should explain how these groups will be engaged throughout the project and highlight the specific benefits their participation will contribute to achieving the project’s objectives. The role of local authorities, often key to facilitating coordination during implementation and enhancing the project’s impact at the local level, should also be highlighted.

From the Field – 14
<i>In working with vulnerable communities, some civil society organisations present themselves as gatekeepers, claiming to represent the entire group. Their early involvement often seems essential for access and legitimacy. However, along the way, it sometimes becomes clear that these organisations no longer reflect the voices they claim to represent, but have instead become power centres in the sector. For fragile target groups, it’s crucial to engage both CSOs and go directly to the field. Listen to individuals, visit communities, and ensure real voices are heard. Representation should never be assumed; it must be verified.</i>

By clearly linking the roles of the actors to the project objectives, this section will demonstrate how coordination among stakeholders will be achieved and how the contributions of all involved parties will support the success of the action.

8.4.6. Monitoring Arrangements and Follow-up Plans

The project monitoring approach emerged as a means to enhance accountability and measure impact in development work. Since the 1960s, monitoring and evaluation processes have become institutionalised, particularly within the practices of international donors. Monitoring is on one side a reporting mechanism; in another, it serves as a tool for adaptation and strengthening governance. Well-designed monitoring plans provide a shared learning platform for both implementers and stakeholders, while facilitating strategic guidance throughout the project lifecycle.

In this section of the *full application*, the planned monitoring arrangements and ongoing follow-up processes for tracking the progress of the project and ensuring the achievement of objectives should be explained. Monitoring aims to assess whether activities at each stage of the project are being carried out on time, within the budget, and in accordance with the established quality standards. This involves regular data collection, analysis, and reporting to identify potential issues early and implement corrective measures where needed. Effective monitoring ensures that the project stays aligned with its goals and delivers the expected outcomes.

“Monitor & Control is a group of continuous activities that spans the life of a project. These activities are focused on measuring the correct execution of the project against the agreed baselines using key metrics like costs, time and quality indicators, and taking corrective actions if the execution goes too far off plan.” (PM², p. 130)

The project team should prepare progress reports at regular intervals, which must be reviewed by the project manager or the steering committee. Monthly reports for project management and quarterly reports for the project monitoring committee will provide information on project progress, challenges encountered, and proposed solutions. This process offers an opportunity to regularly evaluate the project’s trajectory.

Performance indicators to be used in the monitoring process should also be stated. For instance, measures such as the number of target group members reached, completed training sessions, or materials produced can serve as evaluation criteria. Deliverable commitments outlined in the previous section should be examined in the monitoring and control processes on an activity and component basis. During the follow-up phase, the sustainability of the outputs achieved and the long-term impacts of the project should be assessed.

Example 14: Monitoring Arrangements

In a project aiming to strengthen municipal support for local entrepreneurship, a four-tier monitoring structure is established:

- Weekly Coordination Meetings (PCT): Internal meetings to review weekly progress, assign tasks, and address urgent implementation challenges.
- Monthly Management Meetings (PCT + PST): Used to review activity timelines, resolve bottlenecks, and ensure implementation stays on track.
- Quarterly Steering Committee Meetings: Ensures strategic alignment by reviewing results, risks, and suggesting high-level adjustments as needed.
- Contracting Authority Monitoring Visits: On-site inspections verifying budget compliance and consistency between reported and actual implementation progress.

8.4.7. Internal and External Evaluation Processes

This section should explain how the internal and external evaluation processes of the project are planned. Evaluation processes are used to measure the project's effectiveness, efficiency, and degree of success in achieving its objectives. In drafting the project proposal, evaluation should be addressed under two subheadings: internal and external evaluation. According to PRAG rules, if the grant amount exceeds EUR 500,000, external evaluation becomes mandatory.

Internal evaluation is usually conducted by the project team or a designated unit within the organisation. For example, the accounting unit may monitor financial management processes to ensure that the budget is used accurately and efficiently. Additionally, the steering committee, which regularly monitors project progress, can evaluate the activities and performance of the project. This process is implemented to prevent deviations from the project's objectives and to take necessary corrective actions.

External evaluation can be carried out by an independent company or a specialised organisation. For instance, a professional evaluation firm may be contracted to assess the project's results and impacts objectively. Additionally, the contracting authority may request regular monitoring and evaluation reports to verify that the project is progressing in line with its objectives and complies with EU standards. If the project budget is low and external evaluation costs are high, it would be appropriate to propose the contracting authority's external evaluation mechanism as part of the project.

Example 15: Internal and External Evaluation

Internal evaluation will be integrated into the project's routine management processes to ensure ongoing learning and accountability. The Project Core Team (PCT) will prepare brief weekly updates summarising progress against planned activities, budget use, and participation indicators. These summaries will feed into the Monthly Management Meetings, where the PCT and Project Support Team will jointly review implementation status and take corrective actions if needed. The Steering Committee will meet quarterly to assess overall performance, review financial updates prepared by the municipal accounting unit, and reflect on key lessons. This layered structure is designed to support timely decision-making, strengthen transparency, and ensure the project remains aligned with its objectives throughout implementation.

External evaluation will be carried out by the Contracting Authority and the Lead Institution, in line with PRAG requirements. Three monitoring missions (2 physical and one online) will be organised by the Authority's monitoring unit. These will involve field visits, interviews with beneficiaries, and document reviews to assess effectiveness, efficiency, and impact. Since no project funds are allocated for hiring external evaluators, these activities will be realised as external evaluation. Draft findings will be shared for feedback before finalisation. The results will guide final reporting, support future planning, and be shared publicly to promote transparency and learning.

8.4.8. Visibility of Action and EU Contribution

Visibility refers to the extent to which an individual, organization, or initiative is recognized and understood by the public or relevant stakeholders through deliberate communication and presence. An example of how donor organizations value visibility can be seen in individual philanthropic efforts. When famous businesspeople or artists make donations, the names of their foundations (often reflecting their surnames) are displayed on plaques in front of schools, hospitals, or retirement homes.

Bill Gates' focus on health and education, Michael Bloomberg's support for public health and urban policy, or George Soros' work through the Open Society Foundations are prominent examples. As seen in these cases, donors not only provide resources but also position themselves publicly by making the themes and values they support visible. At this point, visibility becomes a tool for clearly demonstrating what the donor advocates and aims to achieve. Visibility efforts can be grouped under three main objectives: (1) accountability, (2) impact generation and awareness raising, and (3) strategic promotion and cooperation.

Donors operating with public or foundation funds are obliged to show how the money is spent and what results are achieved. Therefore, visibility activities play a key role in documenting the outputs of a project and communicating them to stakeholders. Additionally, donors may wish to raise public awareness and increase social consciousness around the themes they support, such as the environment or youth. Projects with strong visibility also attract the attention of other institutions and potential partners, giving an opportunity for new collaborations.

In the EU's approach, visibility is mandatory. It is also a strategic necessity in terms of transparency, accountability, and dissemination of impact. According to European Commission guidelines, "EU emblem is the single-most important visual brand used to acknowledge the origin and ensure the visibility of any EU funding (EC, 2022b)." Visibility also allows the EU to strengthen its presence in the localities where the project is implemented. However, as indicated in Chapter 4 of this Manual, under the PRAG 2025 revision, visibility expenses may only be included in the budget if explicitly permitted by the guidelines. On the other hand, it is likely that this permission will be arranged in grant programmes targeting soft projects.

Communication and visibility efforts in EU-funded projects must comply with ten basic rules (EC, 2025j). First, all documents and materials must clearly acknowledge EU support. Second, project communications must reference contributions to the EU's political priorities. Third, tailored communication activities should be planned, using tools such as websites, social media, events, and information boards. Fourth, the EU emblem must be used correctly, not combined with any other logo, and be at least the same size as the largest logo present. Fifth, the statement "Funded by the European Union" must accompany the emblem. Sixth, all information must be accurate and based on official EU sources. Seventh, if the project is strategic or has significant media impact, EU institutions must be involved in communication processes. Eighth, communication expenses are considered eligible and can be included in the budget. Ninth, the EU holds a free, non-exclusive, and irrevocable right to use communication materials produced in the project. Tenth and the last, failure to comply with these rules may result in financial penalties.

In the context of *full application*, all planned activities to enhance the project's visibility and highlight the EU's financial contribution should be designed in compliance with the EU Visibility Guidelines. Beyond their primary role, project activities should aim to reach the general public and support the promotion of the EU's role.

A communication and visibility plan should be developed and implemented from the beginning of the project. The plan must detail the tools and channels to be used to inform the public about the project and raise awareness. For small-scale projects, the communication and visibility plan can be concise, up to 10 pages. Examples of communication channels that can be included in the project's communication plan are provided below.

- **Press Releases and Media Coverage:** Regular press releases can be issued to announce the project's launch, key milestones, and results. Collaboration with local and national media outlets can help the project reach a wider audience.
- **Digital Channels:** A project website, social media accounts, and visual materials featuring the EU support logo should be created.
- **Events:** Promotional materials emphasising the EU's contribution should be used in workshops, training programs, or project closing events.
-

Important Note – 17

It is recommended that each proposal include the following statement in this section: "All visibility activities will fully comply with the EU Visibility Guidelines, including the correct use of the EU logo, clear recognition of EU funding, and the communication of accurate and consistent messages."

8.5. Indicative Action Plan

The Indicative Action Plan is a roadmap that shows when, how, and by whom the project will be implemented. If we compare the project to a train journey, this plan defines the order of stops and the estimated times of arrival. However, timing is not the only concern; there must also be a logical sequence between activities. For example, awareness-raising campaigns on waste separation cannot begin before the installation of recycling bins, as one activity's output becomes the input for the next. Without this logical connection, the project flow may be disrupted. Therefore, properly sequencing activities is important.

This section includes an action plan table provided by the PRAG template, which must be filled out based on activities, timing, and the responsible entity. Applicants should not provide a specific start date for the action; instead, terms like "Month 1" and "Month 2" should be used. The estimation of activities and total duration should be based on the most likely timeframe, taking all relevant factors into account and project should not assume the shortest possible completion time.

Example 16: Half Year Time Table

Year 1							
	<i>Half Year 1</i>						
<i>Activity</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M4</i>	<i>M5</i>	<i>M6</i>	<i>Implementing Body</i>
<i>1.1. Prep.</i>							<i>Lead – Co.</i>
<i>1.1. Imp.</i>							<i>Lead</i>
<i>1.2. Prep.</i>							<i>Lead</i>
<i>1.2. Imp.</i>							<i>Co-Applicant</i>

The activities listed in the action plan must align with the details provided in other sections. If no activities are planned for certain months or periods, those months should be left blank but not removed from the table.

The action plan for the first 12 months should clearly outline the preparation (Prep.) and implementation (Imp.) phases of each activity in detail. For subsequent years, the action plans may be more general and should include only the main activities. These plans should be divided into six-month periods.

Example 17: Time Table for Subsequent Years					
<i>Year 2 and 3</i>					
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Half Year 1</i>	<i>Half Year 2</i>	<i>Half Year 3</i>	<i>Half Year 4</i>	<i>Implementing Body</i>
2.3.					<i>Co-Applicant</i>
3.1.					<i>Lead</i>
3.2.					<i>Lead</i>

8.6. Sustainability of the Action

Sustainability entered the international agenda with the United Nation’s (UN) 1987 Brundtland Report, which defined it as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN, 1987). The 1992 Rio Summit elevated the concept to a global commitment, emphasising that economic, social, and environmental dimensions must be addressed together. With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, sustainability became embedded in every nation’s development strategy. The European Union placed the principle at the core of its growth model through the 2001 Goteborg Strategy and the 2019 European Green Deal, highlighting a 2050 climate-neutral goal, a 55 % emissions-reduction target, a circular economy, and Just Transition mechanisms.

At the project level, on the other hand, sustainability involves financial, institutional, and social continuity as well as environmental care. The term contains not only reducing the carbon footprint but also using resources efficiently for long-term stakeholder ownership, and ensuring that benefits persist after the project ends. In this way, sustainability transforms a temporary intervention into lasting value. From the EU’s perspective, it also safeguards the investment (the grant awarded) from being wasted.

Under the Sustainability of the Action heading of the *full application*, it is expected that the technical, economic, social, and political impacts of the action on target groups and beneficiaries after the project’s completion are explained in detail. Additionally, risks associated with each activity should be identified, alongside steps to manage those risks and ensure sustainability. Strategies for financial, institutional, policy-level, and environmental sustainability, as well as dissemination and knowledge-sharing plans, should also be included. This section must be written within a maximum of 3 pages, and the length of each part should be distributed appropriately according to the content of the questions, as outlined in the Table.

Table 24: Suggested Outline for Sustainability Section		
<i>Request of the Application Form</i>	<i>Suggested Shortened Headings</i>	<i>Number of pages</i>
<i>Describe the expected long-lasting benefits of the action on its target groups and final beneficiaries (if different from target groups), with qualitative and quantified data where possible, at technical, economic, social, and policy levels (will it lead to improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods, etc.?).</i>	<i>Expected Long-Term Benefits</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Provide a detailed risk analysis and contingency plan. This should include a list of risks accompanied by relevant mitigation measures. A good risk analysis will include a range of risk types including physical, environmental, political, economic and social risks.</i>	<i>Risk Analysis and Contingency Plan</i>	<i>0,5</i>
<i>Describe the possibilities for multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, cross-fertilisation of experience and knowledge sharing.</i>	<i>Multiplier Effects</i>	<i>0,5</i>
<i>Explain how the action will be made sustainable after completion. This may include necessary follow-up activities, built-in strategies, ownership, communication plan, etc. Distinguish between four types of sustainability: financial, institutional, policy level and environmental.</i>	<i>Sustainability Strategy</i>	<i>1</i>

8.6.1. Expected Long-Term Benefits

The expected impact of the action on target groups and final beneficiaries is one of the key components of the project's success and thereby a key area of evaluation. Demonstrating a long-term change is important to justify the relevance of the project and also visualising in the eye of an evaluator its sustainability beyond the implementation period. Impact should be assessed across four key dimensions, namely technical, economic, social, and policy by using both qualitative insights and quantitative evidence wherever possible. Importantly, it would be good to report outputs as the focus is on how these outputs will lead to sustained improvements and structural change over time.

Technical impact refers to the long-term improvement of the target group's knowledge and capacity to adopt new technologies or new skills. For instance, in an agricultural project that introduces modern irrigation systems, the immediate output may be "200 farmers trained and applying the method." However, the impact is realised when these practices become the norm, leading to region-wide improvements in water efficiency and productivity. Over time, this could contribute to higher food security through more consistent crop yields, reduced resource waste by optimising water usage, improved resilience against climate change, and the broader dissemination of agricultural innovation as neighbouring farmers adopt similar techniques.

Economic impact should also be understood in terms of lasting economic development, rather than just immediate results. While creating 50 jobs or increasing local businesses by 0.2% are important outputs, the real impact occurs if these jobs are sustained. The Action's long-term success would be reflected in a strengthened local labour market through sustained job creation and workforce development; improved household incomes driven by expanded business opportunities and stable employment; and reduced dependence on external economic support as local economies become more self-reliant and attract new investments.

Social impact involves deepening inclusion, equity, and overall well-being within the community. A project that trains 150 disadvantaged youth in digital skills, with 120 completing certification, achieves a measurable output. However, the longer-term impact lies in increased employability leading to stable jobs, enhanced self-confidence encouraging further education or civic participation, reduced social marginalisation through integration into the economy, and the potential for trained youth to mentor others, creating a wave effect in their communities.

Policy impact looks at how project activities can trigger institutional or legislative change. While the adoption of an energy efficiency action plan is a valuable output, its impact is demonstrated through the actual implementation of measures, the integration of sustainability into municipal planning, increased budget allocations for green initiatives, alignment with national climate strategies, improved public awareness and compliance, and replication by other regions adopting similar policy frameworks influenced by the project's success.

In sum, the project's long-term value is measured not by what it delivers during implementation, but by the lasting changes it generates in socio-economic systems, behaviours, policies and structures.

8.6.2. Risk Analysis and Contingency Plan

In projects, risk refers to internal or external events with uncertain likelihood that may negatively affect the achievement of defined objectives. Effective risk management involves a continuous cycle of identification, analysis, monitoring, and control. Through this process, unexpected deviations can be anticipated, and both the likelihood and impact of risks can be reduced. A risk management plan also aims to identify opportunities that may lead to positive outcomes and maximise their benefits. By delivering tangible results to beneficiaries and avoiding waste of donor funds, the project builds stakeholder trust and ensures efficient use of resources by the team. Moreover, a structured risk approach enhances foresight throughout the project lifecycle and facilitates better adaptation.

In the PM² methodology the Risk Likelihood/Impact Matrix is a tool used to evaluate identified project risks by measuring how likely they are to occur and how severe their consequences would be (PM², p. 101). Both likelihood and impact are typically scored on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=Very low, 2=Low, 3=Medium, 4=High, 5=Very high), and their multiplication gives the overall risk score, ranging from 1 to 25. This method prioritises risks and determines appropriate response strategies based on the organisation's tolerance.

This section should provide a detailed explanation of potential risks that may arise during project implementation and the measures that are planned to mitigate risk impact. As outlined in the PRAG template, a strong risk analysis should cover physical, environmental, political, economic, and social risks, with appropriate preventive measures and solutions proposed for each. The template offers a clear framework for the type of response expected. Thus, addressing all five risk areas outlined in the template is essential to achieve full marks. Additionally, a contingency plan should be developed for each risk category. Another critical point emphasised in the PRAG template is the recommendation to directly align risks with project activities. The specified risk categories are explained below:

- **Physical Risk:** This type of risks refers to events that might directly disrupt project operations, such as infrastructure failures or power outages. These are tangible, location-specific challenges. For example, in a training-focused soft project, unstable internet connectivity at rural venues may interrupt online learning activities.

- **Environmental Risks:** These involve potential negative impacts on the environment or environmental conditions that might complicate project delivery. For instance, prolonged rainfall during the implementation of outdoor activities may delay fieldwork or damage materials.
- **Political Risks:** This category includes developments such as local elections, regulatory changes, or administrative restructuring that may influence project execution. Projects designed with adaptable frameworks and open communication with authorities can mitigate such risks more effectively.
- **Economic Risks:** These relate to financial uncertainties such as currency devaluation, high inflation, rising procurement costs, or delays in disbursement. Including indirect costs and a contingency reserve in the budget allows the project to remain resilient in the face of manageable uncertainties.
- **Social Risks:** These emerge when the project fails to engage its target audience or faces public opposition. Encouraging stakeholder participation from the beginning and establishing transparent, inclusive communication channels may enhance acceptance and support.

For each risk, the probability, potential impacts, and related activities should be indicated, and specific measures to mitigate their effects should be identified. In the Example 18, “local elections” are identified as a risk. Since the election date is fixed, its likelihood is rated as 5. While the outcome of the election is unlikely to fundamentally alter the project, given the fact that the grant agreement represents not a personal, but an institutional commitment, it would also be unrealistic to assume there will be no effect. Potential challenges may include new appointments, delays caused by newly elected management evaluating the project, and other transitional issues. As a result, the risk impact is assessed as 3. The risk type is classified as political, as it directly relates to an electoral event. The output most likely to be affected is Output 2, which (within this example) contains the majority of activities involving the municipality. To mitigate this risk, a municipal council decision is planned prior to the start of implementation, thereby politically committing the municipality and ensuring continuity regardless of election outcomes.

Example 18: Risk Management Plan						
<i>Risk Description</i>	<i>Risk Likelihood</i>	<i>Risk Impact</i>	<i>Risk Score</i>	<i>Risk Type</i>	<i>Concerned Output</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
<i>Local elections</i>	5	3	15	<i>Political</i>	<i>Output 2</i>	<i>Secure an official municipal council decision endorsing the project. This ensures institutional commitment and binds future political leadership, regardless of election outcomes.</i>

8.6.3. Multiplier Effects

In EU projects, the multiplier effect refers to the exponential growth of impact that occurs when project results are adopted and applied by direct target groups. Consequently, this section must explain how the project outputs will be replicated, disseminated, and sustained by other institutions and regions. Projects not only generate valuable outputs and findings; they also develop models for transmitting these results to their target groups; and, when appropriate, to broader communities.

“Multiplication is the planned process of convincing the direct target groups, meaning associations or institutions to adopt and/or apply the results of the Project.” (EC, 2022c)

Sustainability is a project’s ability to continue after funding ends and to leave a lasting impact on end-users. Exploitation, by contrast, concerns putting results into active use and securing their acceptance. Exploitation involves two interconnected processes:

- **Multiplication:** persuading direct target groups (e.g., specific organisations or associations) to adopt and implement project outputs.
- **Mainstreaming:** transferring successful results to indirect target groups such as decision-makers, opinion leaders, or national-level system actors.

Together, these processes show that a project’s influence is not confined to its implementation period but can drive broader, systemic change.

In the PRAG application template, the multiplier effect is addressed under four headings: Scope for Replication, Extension, Cross-Fertilisation of Experience, and Knowledge Sharing.

- **Scope for Replication:** the potential to duplicate methods and practices in similar settings. For example, digital-literacy workshops piloted in one district can be run unchanged in neighbouring municipalities, reaching hundreds of more young people.
- **Extension:** adapting activities to new target groups or areas. A workshop first designed for youth can be expanded (with additional modules) to serve women’s cooperatives, thus widening the project’s reach.
- **Cross-Fertilisation of Experience:** combining insights from different fields to create richer approaches. Joint sessions between digital trainers and local entrepreneurship mentors blend technological skills with business practice, enriching both.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** openly distributing materials and lessons learned. Workshop guides, videos, and evaluation reports are published on an open platform so other municipalities can download, adapt, and launch their own initiatives, fostering a sustainable learning network.

Based on this framework, the multiplier-effect section should open with a concise rationale that defends the project’s model. To achieve top marks, each of the four subheadings above must then be addressed, demonstrating the project’s concrete potential in every area.

From the Field – 15

<i>Many applications defend this section with costly assumptions absent from project activities such as post-completion investments, future models, or later initiatives. The argument should rest on tasks actually included in the work plan. For example, if the project produces a local economic development guide for one municipality, claiming it will later reach every municipality via the national association is baseless when no related activity or budget is provided. Avoid unrealistic promises; multiplier effects must stem from what the project can truly deliver.</i>
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8.6.4. Sustainability

Sustainability is no longer just an ideal approach; it has become a necessity for organisations and projects. The European Commission has taken a leading role in this field with initiatives promoting a sustainable economy. The European Green Deal emphasises the need for an economic system that promotes growth while protecting the planet and enhancing the quality of life for citizens. Sustainability now extends beyond environmental responsibility, aiming to balance economic, environmental, and social well-being. In this context, project proposals must integrate sustainability and consider it as a cross-cutting theme.

Important Note – 18

<i>All sustainability explanations must be directly aligned with the project's planned activities and overall nature. Introducing new or non-budgeted activities to justify sustainability is a common mistake applicants make and should be strictly avoided.</i>
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Under the “Sustainability” heading, different dimensions of sustainability should be explained after the project’s completion. Strategies, follow-up activities, local ownership, and other factors necessary to ensure the long-term impact of the project’s outputs and results should be detailed. As outlined in the PRAG template, sustainability should be addressed under four main categories: financial, institutional, policy-level, and environmental sustainability.

- **Financial Sustainability:** This refers to the availability and reliability of financial resources to continue delivering the services or benefits initiated by the project. It is important to explain how the project will ensure financial sustainability. For example, the project may introduce a community service that will later be included in the municipal annual budget to ensure the continuation of the service. Alternatively, agreements with local stakeholders or integration into existing funding schemes can demonstrate that the initiative will be financially supported beyond the project’s duration.
- **Institutional Sustainability:** This concerns the structures, roles, and responsibilities that ensure the long-term continuation of the project’s results within existing institutions. Emphasising project outputs like capacity building or established coordination mechanisms is an effective way to demonstrate institutional sustainability. For example, staff trained during the project may later be assigned to permanent roles in the local administration to continue delivering services. The formal integration of project tasks into job descriptions or organisational workflows demonstrates local ownership and secures institutional continuity.

- **Policy-Level Sustainability:** This refers to the potential of the action to generate lasting policy-related effects, such as improved legislation, updated codes of conduct, or the adoption of new operational methods. If the project has contributed to the development of such outcomes, then the proposal should demonstrate how the project outputs evolve into policy-level practices. For example, the project may have resulted in a practical model that was later integrated into the municipality’s official strategic or action plans. This formal adoption shows that the approach becomes a recognised and permanent part of municipal policy and practice.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** This involves the project’s long-term impact on the natural environment and the steps taken to protect it. Any efforts to minimise environmental harm should be indicated here. One effective approach is a commitment to minimising the use of printed materials and prioritising digital communication. Additionally, using recyclable or sustainably sourced materials throughout project activities demonstrates environmental responsibility and supports broader sustainability goals.
-

From the Field – 16

In the early 2010s, applicants often interpreted the sustainability section narrowly, and focused almost exclusively on financial continuity. Most proposals revolved around how the project outcome would be financed after the project or how they might attract future funding. Fast forward to the 2020s, and the pendulum has swung the other way: nearly every answer now frames sustainability through the lens of climate action and the SDGs. While both perspectives are valuable, a balanced approach is often missing. True sustainability should reflect financial, institutional, political, and environmental dimensions – only then can impact truly last.

8.7. Logical Framework

The logical framework is a planning tool used to provide an overview of a project’s objectives, expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Just as the “Summary of the Action” section in the *concept note* provides general information about the project, the “Logical Framework” serves a similar purpose during the *full application* phase. This framework offers a fundamental method for evaluating the project’s success by presenting its objectives in concrete and measurable terms. Typically structured around impacts, outcomes, and outputs, the logical framework demonstrates how project activities contribute to overall objectives.

“The Logical framework (logframe) matrix is a table that captures in a structured way the hierarchy of results of the action.” (ePRAG, 2025g, p.1)

In the logical framework table, the vertical columns include result chain, indicator, unit of measure, baseline, target, sources of data, and assumptions as the seven sections (ePRAG, 2025f).

- **Results Chain:** The results chain shows how outputs lead to outcomes and outcomes lead to long-term impacts. Linking broader goals to concrete activities provides a logical framework that structures the action.
- **Indicators:** Indicators are tools to measure if a result (impact, outcome, or output) has been achieved. They must be neutral, clear, and measurable, without showing direction.

- **Unit of Measure:** Each indicator needs a clear unit like number, percentage or score for consistency. The same unit applies to both baseline and target values.
- **Baseline:** The baseline is the current value of the indicator before the action starts. If unavailable, a reason must be given, such as the non-existence of the indicator at present or lack of available data.
- **Target:** The target is the desired final value of the indicator at a specific future time. If the baseline is unknown, the method and timing for its determination should be stated.
- **Sources of Data:** This refers to documents, reports, or people that will provide evidence for each indicator's results. Accurate data sources are essential for verifying achievements.
- **Assumptions:** Assumptions are positive external conditions needed for the results to occur, yet remain beyond your control. They support the logic that connects outputs to outcomes and outcomes to impact.

When filling out these columns, it is essential to use data and figures directly from the project. Indicators and verification sources should be based on information already present in the project documentation.

The first step in creating a logical framework is defining the project's overall impact. Impact refers to the long-term, broad-scale changes the project aims to achieve. Whether social, economic, political, or environmental, the impact represents the value and contribution the project provides to society. Applicants are expected to define the general objective of their project in precise terms. For example, "Strengthened public safety and resilience through enhanced firefighting response capabilities aligned with EU operational standards" may serve as a suitable overarching goal. The means of measuring this goal should be detailed, using indicators such as the reduction in average emergency response time in intervention areas. Baseline and target values for each indicator are to be included, along with references to data sources that will be used to track progress.

Example 19: Impact Framework					
<i>Result Chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit of Measure</i>	<i>Baseline</i> (value & reference year)	<i>Target</i> (value & reference year)	<i>Sources of Data</i>
<i>Strengthened public safety and resilience through enhanced firefighting response capabilities aligned with EU operational standards.</i>	<i>Reduction in average emergency response time in intervention areas.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>10 minutes in 2025</i>	<i>15% reduction in average emergency response time by 2028.</i>	<i>Official emergency response time statistics from local firefighting authorities; Annual public safety reports; Independent evaluation reports comparing pre- and post-intervention response times</i>

Outcomes, which represent the medium-term effects of the project, describe the direct changes experienced by target groups and beneficiaries. These changes are often at the behavioural, social, or institutional level. Outcomes must be defined in alignment with the project’s specific objectives and supported by measurable indicators. For example, in an educational project, an expected outcome might be “70% of participants improve their professional skills.” Data sources and methods for measuring these outcomes should also be planned.

Example 20: Outcome Framework						
<i>Result Chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit of measure</i>	<i>Baseline</i> (value & reference year)	<i>Target</i> (value & reference year)	<i>Sources of Data</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
<i>Outcome 1: Improved emergency response capacity and standardisation among local firefighting units, enabling quicker, safer, and more coordinated interventions in line with EU-level operational protocols.</i>	<i>Percentage of trained firefighters who demonstrate improved response performance in standardised emergency simulations.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>80% of certified firefighters score above 75% in post-training emergency response simulation assessments by Q1 2027.</i>	<i>Simulation performance reports; Assessment scoring sheets; Post-training evaluation summaries by supervisors</i>	<i>Sustained institutional support, availability of simulation infrastructure, and continued motivation of trainees</i>

Outputs refer to the tangible products or services resulting from specific project activities, and they are direct results of project actions. For instance, “A group of 100 individuals completing training programs and receiving certificates” can be considered an output which demonstrate the effectiveness of project activities.

Example 21: Output Framework						
<i>Result Chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Unit of measure</i>	<i>Baseline</i> (value & reference year)	<i>Target</i> (value & reference year)	<i>Sources of Data</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
<i>Output 1 related to outcome 1: 50 firefighters receive EU-certified emergency response training certificates.</i>	<i>Indicator 1 to output 1: EU-certified emergency response training curriculum developed and approved.</i>	<i>Number of training curriculum</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1 approved curriculum by Q2 2026.</i>	<i>Signed curriculum approval document; Collaboration agreement with accredited training institution; Final version of the curriculum with validation records.</i>	<i>Qualified trainers are available throughout; Firefighters attend full training program.</i>

Another key component of the logical framework is assumptions. Assumptions are conditions outside the project's control that are necessary for successful implementation. Examples might include "The target group participates in the training" or "Political stability is maintained." These assumptions are critical for the project's success.

Example 22: Activities Matrix			
<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Indicative inputs and amounts</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
<i>Output 1.1: 50 firefighters receive EU-certified emergency response training certificates.</i>	<i>1.1.1. Development of EU-certified emergency response training curriculum</i>	<i>Expert (200 € x 4 days) + Operational cost (7200€)</i>	<i>Qualified trainers are available throughout; Firefighters attend full training program.</i>

The Activity Matrix is a table located on the final page of the Logical Framework document. In the Output column, the outputs listed in the Log frame should be re-written here. Following that, the activity title associated with each respective output must be stated. Each activity should be linked to a specific output, and this relationship should be evident through consistent numbering.

In the Indicative Inputs and Amounts column, a summary of the resources required to implement each activity (such as human resources, equipment, expert support, and training materials) should be provided. This section highlights the importance of activity-based budgeting. While a highly detailed budget breakdown is not required here, the total cost of each activity should be indicated. In this example below, costs are divided into two sections: human resources (e.g., 200 € × 4 days) and operational costs (e.g., 7,200 € for travel, accommodation, and materials).

Finally, in the Assumptions column, the assumptions already listed in the Logframe for the relevant output should be restated here.

From the Field – 17
<i>It's surprising how often logical frameworks are treated as an afterthought in project writing trainings. In many sessions, logframes (if addressed at all) are squeezed into the final hour of a three-day agenda. Yet, this should be the first topic tackled when preparing a full application. A well-thought logframe makes the rest of the proposal practically write itself. Sadly, many applicants skip or rush this section, costing them critical points. Starting with the logframe and budget isn't just a good practice, it's essential for the EU-way of proposal writing.</i>

8.8. Budget

The project budget is the total financial resource allocated for all expenditures within the scope of a project, aimed at achieving specific objectives within a defined period. In other words, it is the monetary equivalent of the resources needed to accomplish a project's goals. Budget management, therefore, aims to keep project spending within approved limits while successfully delivering the intended results.

A project is considered successful when four key criteria are met (PM4DEV, 2015): the scope is completed on time, the budget is not exceeded, the outputs meet quality expectations, and both the donor and beneficiaries are satisfied. However, in practice, project managers often focus primarily on timely delivery and overlook the importance of monitoring and controlling the budget.

Thus, project budget management involves more than simply drafting a budget. It is a systematic process comprising definition, execution, control, and revision. During the definition phase, costs for all activities are estimated in detail. In the execution phase, these costs turn into actual expenditures. The control phase assesses whether spending aligns with the plan. Finally, in response to evolving conditions, the budget may be updated accordingly.

From the Field – 18
<i>One key lesson from monitoring and evaluation in EU-funded projects is that some grant recipients tend to overspend during the first half of the project, later facing financial difficulties in implementing final activities. The main reason for this is the lack of a realistic cost analysis during the proposal development phase. Another common issue is the absence of an effective internal budget control system throughout implementation.</i>

The EU project budget is a detailed document which ensures the systematic planning and reporting of all expenses required for project implementation. The budget explains which resources will be used and how they will be allocated to achieve the project's objectives. Additionally, as it is prepared in accordance with EU financing rules, the budget plays a crucial role in transparency, accountability, and project management.

The budget table in the PRAG guidelines is an Excel document (ePRAG, 2025h) containing three worksheets. The first worksheet (1a. Budget Cost Based) is the budget table, where a detailed budget for the total project duration and the first 12 months should be prepared. The costs allocated to activities must be itemised. If the project duration is less than 12 months, filling out the total duration section is sufficient (worksheets 1b. and 1c. are only for the FNLC model.). The second worksheet (2. Justification) includes the budget justification, explaining why each cost item is necessary and how it will be used. The third worksheet (3. Expected sources of funding) presents the table showing the amount of funding requested from the contracting authority and the co-financing amount.

In EU grant applications, the budget is a table compiling costs, but it also provides a key picture that reflects the project's logical structure and strategic design. Within the evaluation grid, the budget accounts for 15 out of 100 points. This score is split between two criteria: "6.1 Budget: Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?" (5 points), and "6.2 Efficiency: Is the relationship between estimated budget amounts and expected results adequate?" (10 points). Though seemingly modest, this score can be decisive, as a poorly structured budget may directly reduce the total score when added to other sections and affect the overall ranking of applications.

The reason why the EU evaluates the budget under a separate heading is to assess how efficiently and effectively the proposed resources will be used. If the budget is not consistent with the project's objectives, activities, and expected outputs, the feasibility of the project will be questioned. Therefore, applicants must approach budgeting not only with an accounting mindset but also from a strategic perspective.

The first essential point when preparing the budget is to ensure that all activities are accurately and comprehensively reflected in it. If the application form includes training programmes, workshops, or field visits, the budget must show corresponding cost lines. Otherwise, evaluators may question whether those activities are actually implementable. Likewise, budget items that are not referenced anywhere in the application will be considered "unjustified costs."

Important Note – 19
<i>Only 5 out of 15 points in the budget section are awarded for accurate and complete accounting. The remaining 10 points assess whether the planned spending truly justifies the expected results. This means that even a perfectly balanced budget may lose points if it does not demonstrate value for money.</i>

The second key issue is maintaining a balance between costs and outcomes. For instance, if the total budget is €500,000 and only 30 people are to be trained, the cost-effectiveness of the project will be examined. Although the EU does not strictly apply a “per-unit cost” model, the social impact generated by the expenditure is closely inspected. Thus, the principle of “achieving high impact with limited resources” should always be prioritised. In other words, “the juice should be worth the squeeze.”

One common mistake made by applicants is postponing the budget preparation to the final stage of the application process. However, a budget developed in parallel with the logical framework actually forms the backbone of the project’s strategic setup. Especially in the *full application* stage, the activity plan, logical framework, and budget are seen as complementary documents. Any inconsistency among these documents can undermine the coherence and credibility of the entire proposal.

From the Field – 19
<i>In one application, the lead applicant planned a €500,000 climate planning project at the provincial level, with the co-applicant contributing only €100,000 worth of soft activities. The concept note was approved. However, during the full application phase, it turned out the lead applicant’s actual cost was just €100,000, leaving the co-applicant to justify €400,000 with low-impact soft activities. The mismatch between budget and objectives ultimately led to the proposal’s rejection.</i>

The EU project budget consists of direct and indirect costs (CERN, 2025). Direct costs are eligible costs that can be specifically attributed to the project and are necessary for its implementation. Examples include personnel expenses for staff working on the project, travel and accommodation costs, equipment purchases, material and consumable expenses, and subcontracting costs mentioned in the work plan.

Indirect costs, on the other hand, are eligible costs that cannot be directly attributed to a specific project but support the project indirectly. These costs generally relate to infrastructure, general operational expenses, building rent or depreciation, energy, communication, postal expenses, and administrative management. Indirect costs cover expenditures arising from the general functioning of the organisation and are usually calculated at a fixed rate of 7%.

The EU project budget combines indirect and direct costs, covering various categories of expenditures. Each category details expenses that serve a specific aspect of the project. The budget is structured into 13 subheadings, as outlined in below subsections.

8.8.1. Human Resources (Heading 1)

The Human Resources budget line includes the salaries of personnel working on the project and other expenses related to human resources. Under the “1.1 Salaries” subheading, there are two categories: “1.1.1 Technical” and “1.1.2 Administrative / Support Staff.” Technical personnel refer to staff working on specific project activities rather than management, while administrative personnel include project managers, assistants, or accountants responsible for project coordination.

From the Field – 20

<i>In IPA countries, hiring staff can involve heavy administrative work. A common solution is to engage short-term experts through their own companies. For instance, a gender expert working 5 days at €300/day can be paid €1,500 against an invoice. To ensure transparency and eligibility, the invoice should clearly state: “5-day expert fee.” This method avoids complications related to tax, insurance, or employment registration while staying fully compliant.</i>

The “1.2 Salaries” subheading covers the salaries of international experts or personnel coming from abroad. The “1.3 Per diems for missions/travel” subheading includes three categories: “1.3.1 Abroad” for international travel, “1.3.2 Local” for domestic travel, and “1.3.3 Seminar/conference participants” for those attending seminars or conferences outside their city within the project scope.

In the Example 23, a budget prepared for human resources, a Local Economic Development (LED) expert has been designated as technical personnel with a daily rate of €300 for 10 days. Additionally, a coordinator has been budgeted to manage daily project operations with a monthly salary of €75 per day for 240 days. An expert from France specialising in Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is also planned to work 10 days at a daily rate of €450.

From the Field – 21

<i>When human resources are calculated on a daily basis, it becomes much easier to justify costs in the Logframe’s activity matrix and activity descriptions. This approach allows for a clearer activity-based budgeting structure, where each task can be linked directly to expert input and duration. This strengthens internal consistency and helps evaluators understand how resources are allocated per activity.</i>

Regarding per diems, a study visit to France for four people has been allocated a daily budget of €268 per person, covering accommodation, meals, local travel at the destination, and miscellaneous expenses. Similarly, a French expert visiting Türkiye, a domestic trip to Ankara, and participants traveling from outside the city to attend the project’s opening conference have been assigned a per diem rate of €171. The figures for per diems have been taken from the “EU’s current per diem rates” document published on eeas.europa.eu.

Example 23: Human Resources Budget				
<i>1. Human Resources</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i># of units</i>	<i>Unit value</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>1.1 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, local staff)</i>				
<i>1.1.1 Technical</i>				
<i>1.1.1.1. LED Expert</i>	<i>per day</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>3000</i>
<i>1.1.2 Administrative/ support staff</i>				
<i>1.1.2.1 Project coordinator</i>	<i>per day</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>18000</i>
<i>1.2 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, expat/int. staff)</i>				
<i>1.2.1 BRT Expert (France)</i>	<i>Per day</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>450</i>	<i>4500</i>
<i>1.3 Per diems for missions/travel</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>1.3.1 Abroad (staff assigned to the Action)</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>1.3.1.1. Study Visit to France (3 day 4 people)</i>		<i>268</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>3216</i>
<i>1.3.1.1. BRT Expert (10 day 1 person)</i>		<i>171</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1710</i>
<i>1.3.2 Local (staff assigned to the Action)</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>1.3.2.1 Visit to Capital Ankara (2 day x 10 people)</i>	<i>Per diem</i>	<i>171</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>3420</i>
<i>1.3.3 Seminar/conference participants</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>1.3.3.1 Outside participants to opening conference (20 people x 2 day)</i>	<i>Per diem</i>	<i>171</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>6840</i>
<i>Subtotal Human Resources</i>			<i>40686</i>	

8.8.2. Travel (Heading 2)

The budget items under this heading cover both domestic and international travel. Under the designated budget category, the “2.1 International travel” subheading includes international trips carried out within the scope of specific activities, while the “2.2 Local transportation” subheading refers to domestic travel.

In the Example 24, travel budgets are illustrated. The cost for an international trip has been set at €500, while the cost for a domestic trip has been set at €200. Travel expenses have been categorised based on activities. However, the PRAG guidelines do not impose any strict limitations on subcategories.

For this reason, subcategories such as “2.1.1 Study Visit” and “2.1.2 BRT Expert” can be created and used. Alternatively, a more general budget line, such as “2.1 International Travel (5 people),” can also be provided. In this case, the details can be included in the Justification table, which is available in the 2. worksheet of the budget document.

Example 24: Travel Budget				
<i>2. Travel</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i># of units</i>	<i>Unit value</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>2.1. International travel</i>				
<i>2.1.1 Study visit</i>	<i>Per flight</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>2000</i>
<i>2.1.2 BRT expert</i>	<i>Per flight</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>2.1.3 CO₂ Offsetting</i>	<i>Per flight</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>2.2. Local Transportation</i>				
<i>2.2.1. Visit to Ankara</i>	<i>Per flight</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2000</i>
<i>2.2.2. Outside participants to opening conference</i>	<i>Per flight</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>4000</i>
<i>Subtotal Travel</i>			<i>9000</i>	

The PRAG also encourages (although not compulsory) including the costs of carbon (CO₂) offsetting for air travel in the project budget. These offsets are achieved through credible methods. Acceptable options include supporting internationally recognized environmental initiatives such as CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) or Gold Standard projects, or using offsetting programmes offered by airline companies when available. To ensure transparency, supporting evidence such as certificates or receipts, must be submitted with the financial documentation. Additionally, the place of departure and destination should be indicated for each flight. If this information is not yet available, a general estimated amount can be entered instead.

For example, Turkish Airlines (THY) offers a carbon offsetting programme as part of its environmental responsibility (Turkish Airlines, 2025). The programme allows passengers to offset the carbon footprint generated by their flights. Carbon offsetting refers to compensating for the carbon dioxide emissions released during a flight by supporting emission reduction projects carried out elsewhere. Through the programme offered by THY, passengers can purchase carbon credits equivalent to the emissions resulting from their flights. One carbon credit corresponds to the prevention or removal of one ton of carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere.

THY's carbon offsetting programme uses the carbon footprint calculation methodology developed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which is widely accepted at the global level. The calculation takes into account variables such as flight distance, aircraft type, load factor, flight class, and fuel consumption. Passengers enter their flight details into the system to calculate their carbon footprint, select a project portfolio they wish to support, and after completing their payment, receive a personalised carbon offset certificate.

THY does not charge any commission or fee during this process. All payments are transferred directly to THY's project partner. 85% of the amount paid is allocated to projects through the purchase of carbon credits, while the remaining 15% is used to cover operational expenses. The projects supported under THY's programme span the fields of renewable energy, reforestation, and social development. All projects are certified under internationally recognised standards such as the Gold Standard or Verified Carbon Standard.

8.8.3. Equipment and Supplies (Heading 3)

This budget heading covers expenses related to equipment and supplies. The designated budget category includes the following subheadings: "3.1 Purchase or rent of vehicles," "3.2 Furniture, computer equipment," "3.3 Machines, tools..." "3.4 Spare parts/equipment for machines, tools," and

finally “3.5 Other (please specify)” which includes equipment and materials that do not fall under the previous four subcategories.

In the example table prepared to illustrate equipment and material needs, costs for vehicle rental and office supplies have been included. The specified number of laptops, mobile phones, or quad workstations is purely for demonstration purposes.

For items that are frequently used in the office but do not fit under the first four subheadings, such as specialised software licenses (for tools or platforms essential to the project that are not considered standard computer equipment) or temporary structures (such as tents, portable shelters, or booths required for field activities, exhibitions, or community outreach events), they should be budgeted under the “3.5 Other” category.

Example 25: Equipment and Supplies Budget				
<i>3. Equipment and supplies</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i># of units</i>	<i>Unit value</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>3.1 Purchase or rent of vehicles</i>				
<i>3.1.1 Car Rent</i>	<i>Per month</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>4500</i>
<i>3.2 Furniture, computer equipment</i>				
<i>3.2.1 Laptops</i>	<i>Per unit</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>2000</i>
<i>3.2.1 Mobile phones</i>	<i>Per unit</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>1200</i>
<i>3.2.3 Quad workstation</i>	<i>Per unit</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1500</i>	<i>1500</i>
<i>3.3 Machines, tools...</i>				
<i>3.4 Spare parts/equipment for machines, tools</i>				
<i>3.5 Other (please specify)</i>				
<i>Subtotal Equipment and supplies</i>			<i>9200</i>	

8.8.4. Project Office (Heading 4)

This budget heading includes subcategories for “4.1 Vehicle costs” which covers expenses such as fuel, maintenance, and insurance; “4.2 Office rent” which accounts for office rental costs or shared office fees; “4.3 Consumables - office supplies,” which includes items such as pens, paper, sticky notes, tape, and similar consumables; and “4.4 Other services” which covers expenses like phone bills, heating costs, service charges, and maintenance fees.

Example 26: Project Office Budget				
<i>4. Project office</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i># of units</i>	<i>Unit value</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>4.1 Vehicle costs (fuel)</i>	<i>Per month</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>1200</i>
<i>4.2 Office rent (shared office)</i>	<i>Per month</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>6000</i>
<i>4.3 Consumables - office supplies</i>	<i>Per month</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>1800</i>
<i>4.4 Other services (running costs)</i>	<i>Per month</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>600</i>
<i>Subtotal Project office</i>			<i>9600</i>	

The Example 26 prepared to illustrate project office expenses and no further breakdowns have been provided to demonstrate an alternative approach. In this case, the vehicle has been rented with all maintenance, repair, and insurance costs included; so only fuel expenses are shown in the budget. The office has been rented through a shared office system, eliminating the need for additional costs such as maintenance, repair, or heating.

For office consumables, a monthly cost of €150 has been indicated, with details such as paper, pens, tape, and envelopes to be explained in the justification page. Lastly, running costs package has been listed as a fixed office expense. The item listed under the “Other” heading is generally explained in detail on the budget clarification and justification page.

Under PRAG 2025 revisions, the eligibility of project office costs is subject to specific allowance within the call for proposals. If the guidelines do not explicitly permit such expenses, any project office-related cost will be considered ineligible, regardless of its necessity or relevance to the action. Applicants must carefully the *guideline* before budgeting this heading items.

8.8.5. Other Costs, Services (Heading 5)

This budget heading includes several subcategories: “5.1 Publications” for the costs of printed materials within the project; “5.2 Studies, research” for lump-sum expenses related to studies, surveys, and research activities; “5.3 Expenditure verification/Audit” for sworn financial auditor fees; “5.4 Evaluation costs” for payments to external evaluation firms; “5.5 Translation, interpreters” for translation and interpretation services; “5.6 Financial services” for bank transaction costs; “5.7 Costs of conferences/seminars” for conferences and seminars, which may include multiple budget items; and “5.8 Communication activities” for expenses such as press conferences, influencer collaborations, and website development.

The Example 27 for other expenses and service procurements provides both detailed breakdowns and general budget allocation. In the project, 500 copies of the “Guideline for Energy Efficient Flats” will be printed at €10 per copy. A survey to measure public perception will be conducted by an external company for €10,000, with at least 500 face-to-face interviews, as explained in the justification section.

Additionally, a tourism potential analysis will be conducted by a consultancy firm for a lump sum of €7,000. During the study visit to France, a local interpreter will be hired for €750 per day. The opening conference and local economic development training have been budgeted as lump-sum event costs, with participant numbers and event locations detailed in the justification section.

Finally, to enhance the project’s visibility, agreements have been made with two influencers for promotional posts.

Example 27: Other Costs, Services Budget				
<i>5. Other costs, services</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i># of units</i>	<i>Unit value</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>5.1 Publications (Guideline for Energy Efficient Flats)</i>	<i>per unit</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>5000</i>
<i>5.2 Studies, research</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>5.2.1. Perception Analysis Survey</i>	<i>per unit</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>10000</i>	<i>10000</i>
<i>5.2.2. Urban Tourism Potential Analysis</i>	<i>per unit</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7000</i>	<i>7000</i>
<i>5.3 Expenditure verification/Audit</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>5.4 Evaluation costs</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>5.5 Translation, interpreters (Interpreter for study visit)</i>	<i>per day</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>3000</i>
<i>5.6 Financial services (bank guarantee costs etc.)</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>5.7 Costs of conferences/seminars</i>				<i>0</i>
<i>5.7.1. Opening Conference</i>	<i>Per event</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>10000</i>	<i>10000</i>
<i>5.7.2. Training on LED</i>	<i>Per event</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3000</i>	<i>3000</i>
<i>5.8. Communication activities (influencer deal)</i>	<i>per deal</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3000</i>	<i>6000</i>
<i>Subtotal Other Costs, Services</i>				<i>44000</i>

8.8.6. Other (Heading 6)

This budget category covers costs that are not limited to communication. It also includes expenses related to increasing the project's visibility, ensuring compliance with EU visibility rules, or strengthening awareness of project results.

For example, events organised to promote the project, such as flash mobs or concerts, can be included under this category. Additionally, branding materials like posters or banners with the EU logo, stands ensuring EU visibility at fairs and conferences, videos or photo reports documenting project results, and promotional products featuring the project logo (e.g., pens, bags) are considered within this scope. Costs related to training sessions or workshops that include visibility components are also covered under this budget category.

Example 28: Other Budget				
<i>6. Other (e.g. activities with their related visibility costs)</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i># of units</i>	<i>Unit value</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>6.1. Gastrofest</i>	<i>Per event</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>20000</i>	<i>20000</i>
<i>6.2. Concert</i>	<i>Per event</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>20000</i>	<i>20000</i>
<i>6.3. Water Bottle with Project Logo</i>	<i>Per unit</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>5000</i>
<i>Subtotal Other</i>				<i>45000</i>

Example 28 is provided to explain expenses under the “Others” budget category, a Gastrofest is planned with approximately 2,000 participants, a concert with around 1,000 participants, and 500 water bottles to be distributed as visibility materials.

For instance, the Gastrofest will include multiple stands, side events, and giveaways. Since it consists of various subcategories, it is appropriate to list it as a lump sum under “Others.” Similarly, the concert will cover different cost elements, such as the singer’s fee, concert venue setup, and personnel expenses. In such cases, purchasing all services from a single company would likely be more convenient. The specific details of what the Gastrofest will include should be outlined in the budget justification page to provide evaluators with a strong understanding of the scope of the global-price based procurement.

On the other hand, if the project includes financial support to third parties, this section should also outline how such support will be provided, in line with the narrative description of the action. Detailed information regarding this is to be provided under section 8.3.7. Financial Support to Third Parties.

8.8.7. Subtotal Direct Eligible Costs (Heading 7)

The total budget under this category should be the sum of all expenses from the following budget headings: 1. Human Resources, 2. Travel, 3. Equipment and Supplies, 4. Project Office, 5. Other Costs and Services, and 6. Other.

8.8.8. Indirect Costs (Heading 8)

Under EU funding, indirect costs are different from direct costs, such as staff salaries, infrastructure use, or project equipment, which are listed from 1 and 6 under budget headings. These costs arise from the general operations of the organisation and cannot be specifically assigned to project activities. Under the PRAG 2025 revision, costs such as voluntary work, project office expenses, and land acquisition are no longer included under this budget heading.

Indirect costs include expenses such as building rent or depreciation, utilities (electricity, water, gas), administrative management costs, communication and postal services, and legal consultancy fees. To simplify their calculation, this budget item is generally determined based on a fixed percentage (7%).

There is no need to provide a detailed breakdown under this category. For example, if the total direct costs (budget headings 1 to 6) amount to €80,000, the maximum allowable Indirect Cost (7%) would be €5,600. Since indirect costs are not directly linked to specific expenditures, there is no obligation to report supporting documents to the contracting authority. Before signing the grant contract, however, the lead applicant may be asked to justify the requested percentage.

However, the payment of indirect costs depends on actual project expenditures. For example, if the total project budget is €80,000, but the actual expenditure during the project implementation is €76,000, the contracting authority will calculate and pay 7% of €76,000, which is €5,320.

8.8.9. Total Eligible Costs (Heading 9)

This budget category represents the total amount of budget headings 7 and 8.

8.8.10. Contingency Reserve (Heading 10.1)

In EU project budgets, “Provision for contingency reserve” is a fund allocated for unexpected expenses. This reserve is usually limited to 5% of the total eligible direct costs of the project.

There is no need to provide a detailed breakdown under this category. For example, if the total direct costs (Budget headings 1 to 6) amount to €80,000, the maximum allowable contingency reserve (5%) would be €4,000.

During project implementation, many unforeseen situations may arise. Unexpected events can lead to cost increases or additional expenses. The contingency reserve provides a financial safeguard against such costs. This reserve can be used, for example, for additional costs arising from procurement delays, price increases due to economic fluctuations, or unexpected repairs of technical equipment. By doing so, the project can continue operating smoothly even if minor budget overruns occur. Additionally, this reserve can only be used upon request from the project implementer and with prior approval from the contracting authority.

Including this item in the budget is not mandatory, but it is recommended for effective project management. Being prepared for unexpected situations is essential for the successful completion of the project.

8.8.11. Volunteers' Work (Heading 10.2)

Under this budget category, the cost of contributions provided by volunteers in the project should be included. If such contributions are considered in-kind contributions, volunteer work can be declared as an eligible cost. However, these costs are not classified as direct costs and are not included in the calculation of indirect costs.

Volunteer work can cover up to 50% of co-financing. This shows that volunteer contributions provide significant support to the total project costs. The services provided by volunteers should be calculated as unit costs and reported according to the methods defined by the European Commission. These unit costs are determined based on the time spent and workload of volunteers in specific tasks.

Important Note – 20
<i>Volunteer work (if allowed by the guideline) is not the same as an organisation's co-financing through assigning staff to the project. In the case of volunteer work, no payment is made to the volunteers, but their contribution is valued at a pre-determined rate defined by the EU. However, when a municipality assigns one or two employees to work full-time on the project as part of its 10% co-financing, it continues to pay their regular salaries. In this case, salary slips must be submitted as proof of payment to the Contracting Authority.</i>

This budget category is commonly used in civil society organisations and community-based projects. However, for volunteer work to be considered an eligible cost, it must be permitted in the project guidelines. In addition, the calculation and reporting must comply with the relevant guidelines of the European Commission.

8.8.12. Total Eligible Costs (Heading 11)

This budget category represents the total amount of budget headings 9 and 10.

8.8.13. Taxes and Contributions in Kind (Heading 12)

This budget category explains how taxes and in-kind contributions are handled in the project.

Taxes can only be considered eligible costs if the call for proposals states that such costs are eligible and if the beneficiary(ies) can prove that they cannot reclaim these taxes. However, taxes that can be reclaimed are not considered eligible costs.

For example, if VAT paid on equipment used in a project cannot be reclaimed, then this tax can be included in the project budget. However, direct taxes such as salary taxes are considered part of the gross salary and should not be included under this category.

In-kind contributions can only be included if the call for proposals explicitly states that they are accepted as co-financing. These contributions must match the amount stated in Worksheet 3: “Expected Sources of Funding.”

If volunteer work is considered an in-kind contribution, it should be listed separately under heading 10.2.

Important Note – 21
<i>In most cases, the Contracting Authority obtains a tax exemption for the grant call from the national tax authority. As a result, the guideline typically considers tax payments (such as VAT or other local taxes) as ineligible costs within the project budget. Applicants should carefully review the eligibility rules and avoid including tax expenses unless explicitly allowed.</i>

8.8.14. Total Accepted Costs (Heading 13)

This budget category represents the total amount of budget headings 11 and 12.

8.8.15. Justification of the Budget

Budget justification is like a parent reviewing a shopping list prepared by their child’s school. When the child asks for items from the list such as pens, notebooks, and a backpack, the parent questions whether these needs are truly necessary and whether the prices are reasonable. Similarly, the grant provider examines each item in the project budget to assess how closely the expense is linked to the project activities and whether the cost is aligned with market conditions. It should be remembered that the accuracy of the budget is worth 5 points, while the efficient use of funds and alignment with project objectives accounts for 10 points. Therefore, the justification section supports the scoring related to this 10-point criterion.

Important Note – 22
<i>If the evaluation committee or the contracting authority finds the quality of the cost justification insufficient, they reserve the right to require reimbursement based on actually incurred costs instead of accepting the proposed simplified cost option. Another possible outcome is that, prior to signing the grant agreement, the contracting authority may request a joint revision of the budget with the applicant to align it with a more realistic and justifiable financial scenario.</i>

In the budget template provided on the ePRAG website, Worksheet 2 must be completed to explain the items listed under the budget headings. This worksheet requires filling in two different columns: “Clarification of the Budget Items” and “Justification of the Estimated Costs.”

Under the “Clarification of the Budget Items” section, the necessity of each budget item and its connection to the project’s activities or results should be explained briefly and clearly. For example, when explaining the cost of laptops planned for purchase as part of a training program, it should be stated that these laptops will be used during training sessions and will help improve the digital skills of the target groups. Similarly, for travel expenses related to a field study, it should be noted that these expenses are essential for carrying out the fieldwork.

In the “Justification of the Estimated Costs” section, the calculation method and reference sources for the estimated costs must be explained. The aim is to show that the cost estimates are based on actual costs or permitted simplified cost options. For example, when justifying a €5,000 budget allocated for organising a workshop, it should be stated that this amount covers expenses such as training materials, trainer fees, venue rental, and catering costs, and that each cost item is based on market prices. Additionally, information such as multiple price quotes were obtained and the most cost-effective option was selected can be included in the justification process.

Moreover, cost items such as material purchases, rentals, hotel prices, and travel expenses can be supported by price information obtained from websites.

Example 29: Budget Clarification and Justification		
<i>6. Other</i>	<i>Clarification</i>	<i>Justification</i>
<i>6.1. Gastrofest</i>	<i>A large-scale event designed to showcase and promote geographical indication (GI) products, attracting 2,000 participants and creating a platform for producers and stakeholders to engage.</i>	<i>The event cost of 20,000 Euro covers venue, promotional materials, and logistical arrangements, ensuring maximum outreach to raise awareness about GI products and foster local economic development.</i>
<i>6.2. Concert</i>	<i>A cultural event with 1,000 attendees aimed at raising public awareness on the project’s objectives through engaging and educational performances.</i>	<i>The 20,000 Euro allocation includes artist fees, stage setup, and event organisation costs, ensuring high-quality delivery and impactful messaging to the target audience.</i>
<i>6.3. Water Bottle with Project Logo</i>	<i>Production of 500 branded water bottles to increase the project’s visibility during events and outreach activities.</i>	<i>The 5,000 Euro cost enhances EU visibility guidelines, ensuring effective branding and project recognition among participants and stakeholders.</i>

For example, an example evaluation of the three activities listed under the “6. Other” budget item in Example 28 under the Clarification and Justification headings can be found in Example 29.

8.8.16. Expected Sources of Funding

In the budget template provided on the ePRAG website, Worksheet 3 divides the entire budget into two subcategories: “Expected Sources of Funding” and “Estimated Costs”. The table should be filled with the sample given below.

Table 25: Sample Expected Sources of Funding			
<i>Expected sources of funding (costs-based component or actions fully costs-based)</i>		<i>Amount (EUR)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>EU/EDF contribution sought in this application (A)</i>		€ 89,999,28	90%
<i>CO-FINANCING (1+2+3+4) (B)</i>			
<i>1. Other contributions (applicant, other donors etc)</i>			
<i>Name</i>	<i>Conditions</i>		
<i>Tirebolu Municipality</i>	<i>No conditions. Co-financing by Municipality.</i>	€ 9,999,92	10%
<i>2. Revenue from the action</i>			
<i>To be inserted if applicable and allowed by the guidelines:</i>			
<i>3. In-kind contributions</i>			
<i>4. Volunteers' work</i>			
<i>Expected TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS (A)+(B)</i>		€ 99,999,20	

8.9. PADOR Registration Form

At the full application stage, the lead applicant, co-applicants, and any affiliated entities are required to complete and submit the PADOR (Potential Applicant Data Online Registration) form, included as Annex F of the *guideline*. This form contains detailed institutional information, including the applicant’s legal status, contact details, financial capacity, previous project experience, human resources structure, and areas of activity.

8.10. Experience Tables

In this section, the applicant is expected to provide a detailed description of projects managed within the same sector and of comparable scale over the past three years. Initially, information should focus on projects related to the sector for which the current proposal is being prepared, while in later stages, relevant experiences in other sectors may also be included. A maximum of one page should be dedicated to each project, summarising its scope, objectives, activities, budget, and achieved results.

Example 30: Experience Table (same sector)					
Name of the lead applicant: Tirebolu Municipality					
Project Title: Stronger Fight Together Against Flood, Heavy Rain and Drought			Sector: Climate change		
Location of the action	Amount of the action (EUR)	Role in the action:	Donors to the action (name)	Amount contributed (by donor)	Dates
Tirebolu / Türkiye	100.000 €	Lead applicant	EU (IPA-II)	10.000 €	21.06.2022 – 20.07.2023
Objectives (overall/impact and specific/outcome) and outputs of the action		Overall Impact: Improved climate resilience and environmental sustainability in Tirebolu, Rezekne, and Geraci Siculo through strengthened municipal cooperation.			
		Spesific outcome: Improved local capacity for climate action and sustainable water management.			
		Output 1: Sustainable inter-municipal structures established for sharing water harvesting practices.			
		Output 2: Tirebolu Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan developed.			
This project was implemented to strengthen climate resilience through cooperation between Tirebolu, Rezekne, and Geraci Siculo municipalities. It involved staff exchanges, joint workshops on water harvesting, and the installation of a rainwater harvesting system in Tirebolu. A formal cooperation agreement was signed among the three municipalities. Additionally, a Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan was prepared for Tirebolu. Awareness-raising efforts included public demonstrations and campaigns targeting youth and children to encourage sustainable water use and climate-friendly behaviours.					

In this section, organisations without prior experience in managing European Union projects may also include other projects they have implemented using funds received from different institutions. Organisations wishing to present projects not directly related to the subject of the developed proposal may submit a maximum of 10 such project experiences. However, in some cases, certain organisations may not have received any grant-based projects from donor institutions. It has been observed that in such cases, this section is often left blank. Instead of leaving it empty, it is advisable to highlight at least the initiatives carried out using own resources. An example related to this is provided in the table in the RR below.

Example 31: Experience Table (other sector)						
Name of the lead applicant: Kintara Municipality						
Project Title: Coffee with the Mayor				Sector: Good governance		
Location of the action	Amount of the action (EUR)	Role in the action:	Donors to the action (name)	Amount contributed (by donor)	Dates	
Kintara / Nabori	8.000 €	Project owner	Own financing	-	2022 - 2024	
Objectives (overall/impact and specific/outcome) and outputs of the action		Impact: Strengthened trust and collaboration between local government and citizens.				
		Outcome: Improved citizen participation and responsiveness in local governance.				
		Output 1: Weekly community meetings held in different neighbourhoods.				
		Output 2: Number of citizen feedback reports compiled and addressed.				
Coffee with the Mayor is a community engagement initiative where the mayor sets up a temporary office in a different local coffee shop each week. Citizens are invited to meet the mayor in a relaxed setting to share their concerns, ideas, and suggestions. This project fosters a culture of open governance, strengthens trust, and brings local leadership closer to everyday citizens. Project also supports local businesses by rotating venues and increasing foot traffic.						

Following the section on the lead applicant's experience, and as stated in the application form, the relevant tables must also be completed for the co-applicant(s) and, if applicable, any affiliated entities.

Important Note – 23
<i>This section corresponds to 5 out of 100 points in the evaluation grid. It is recommended to list at least five experiences, whether directly related to the sector or not.</i>

8.11. Lead Applicant Information

As in the *concept note* stage, this section requires all relevant information about the lead applicant. These details should be completed in line with the guidance provided in earlier chapters of the *Manual*.

Important Note – 24
<i>At the application stage, it is sufficient to provide general information about the institution's existing bank account in the "Financial Identification" table. There is no requirement to open a separate project-specific account at this point. If the application is successful, a dedicated bank account for the project will be opened before the grant contract is signed.</i>

8.12. Co-Applicant and Affiliated Entity Information

In the *full application* form, Section 4 concerns the Co-Applicant, while Section 5 pertains to Affiliated Entities. If the project involves a co-applicant and/or affiliated entity, the required information in these sections must be completed. Additionally, the mandate document must be filled out and signed by a person legally authorised to represent the respective organisation.

8.13. Associates Participating in the Action

Associates are institutions or individuals who actively contribute to the project but do not receive funding from the grant. Only per diem and travel costs of the associates may be reimbursed. They are not required to meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the *guideline*. However, they support the success of the action by offering resources such as visibility, expertise, or access to networks.

For example, if a local university provides free venue and lecturers, it could be considered an associate. Similarly, a local media outlet engaged to increase public visibility may also act as an associate. In such cases, associates bring added value to the project, though they carry no financial responsibility. Their role and contributions during project implementation must be defined.

If associates are involved, Section 6 of the *full application* must be duly completed and the necessary signatures provided.

8.14. Checklist

As previously explained in the *concept note* stage, the checklist serves as a self-assessment tool. First, the administrative data must be completed accurately. Then, applicants should ensure that all questions asked in the checklist can confidently be answered with “yes”.

8.15. Declaration by the Lead Applicant

The declaration provided in Section 8 of the application form must be signed by the lead applicant and an authorised representative legally entitled to act on behalf of the organisation. It is also important to note that the first page of the declaration lists several requirements. If the lead applicant does not meet any of these, an annex must be attached to the declaration explaining the reasons for non-compliance with the specific item.

8.16. Assessment Grid for the Full Application

The table in Section 9 of the application form is for internal use by the Contracting Authority and should not be completed by the applicant. Table outlines the step-by-step evaluation process of *full applications*, beginning with administrative checks of the *concept note* and continuing through to eligibility verification. The table ensures that deadlines are met, all required documents are provided, and that the proposal aligns with the selection criteria. Table also confirms that applicants and affiliated entities meet eligibility requirements.

CONCLUSION

In 2018, when we established the Project and Finance Unit at the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT) to focus on EU projects, we sent one of our specialists to a meeting for an EU-funded project. Having previously worked in another department, this colleague was encountering EU projects for the first time. At the meeting, participants introduced themselves in turn, first giving their names and then their institutions. Among them was a representative from the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU) which is the main contracting authority in Türkiye for IPA grants. When her turn came, she stated her name and then spelled out “C-F-C-U” in English to present where she works. Our colleague, hearing this for the first time, assumed the sound of “CFCU” was her unfamiliar foreign surname and thought she was probably married to a foreigner.

That anecdote soon became our Unit’s favourite “Remember Where We Started” story. Years later, the same colleague rose to become deputy manager of the unit, and together we got to a point where we were looking for a new office as our current premises could no longer contain our growing team. Everything can seem scary at first. When I was a budding finance student, the stock ticker numbers constantly scrolling across the TV looked intimidating. But later I realised, they’re really just the quantified expressions of what people felt like eating that day. As you repeat a task, it inevitably becomes simple.

Over time, not only did our team grow in number, but also in knowledge and confidence. We moved from understanding the EU jargon to leading complex grant programmes, drafting multi-million Euro proposals, coordinating with international partners, and mentoring the newcomers. What started as a hesitant but eager first step, turned into a professional culture of continuous learning and creating opportunities.

We used to gather every three months and put all our new ideas on the table. Sometimes it was a global trend, sometimes a new EU regulation, other times a topic tied to national policy. And occasionally, it was simply a thought sparked by one of our team members. Imagine that: the dream of an ordinary public servant, and we could actually spend several million euros to test it, as long as it made empirical sense on paper. What an opportunity!

Across public institutions, local governments, NGOs, universities, and similar bodies, many individuals have innovative or original ideas but struggle to secure the funding to test them. In fact, EU projects offer a realistic option for people in candidate countries to bring ideas they truly believe, in to life. At UMT, we financed the entire PM² certification process for our Project and Finance Unit staff through project budgets, because had we relied on institutional funds, the administration would likely have refused on the grounds of treating all employees equally.

EU projects create a multidisciplinary working environment. Bringing together experts from social sciences, engineering, economics, and other fields allows participants to step outside their specialties and learn new things. This diversity enriches project content and greatly supports individual professional development. Working from multiple perspectives sharpens the staff’s ability to come up with creative solutions. Whenever political leadership introduced a new and unfamiliar task to the Union’s agenda, it was assigned directly to the Project and Finance Unit because there was greater confidence in our experts.

International cooperation is another positive aspect of EU projects. Collaborating with partners from different countries enhances intercultural understanding, broadens the reach of project outputs, and lets solutions be tested across diverse contexts. Such partnerships lay the groundwork for long-term connections at both individual and institutional levels, building an international network. For example, Karatay Municipality established a dedicated project department and expanded its network through various partnerships. As a result of these engagements, the municipality began collaborating with international agencies, which opened new opportunities and inspired Karatay to develop its own Voluntary Local Review (VLR) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2023, Karatay became one of the first three municipalities in Türkiye to prepare and publish a VLR (Karatay Municipality, 2023).

EU funding also acts as a stamp of credibility and quality for supported projects. Securing EU backing indicates that a proposal has survived intense competition. Consequently, public and professional trust in the project, increases. On the field, it is common to hear defences like, “We even received EU funding for this project” to underscore its merit.

Participants encounter fresh knowledge and innovative ideas during the project implementation. Cross-country partnerships accelerate knowledge exchange, enable comparison of different methods, and encourage sharing of best practices, prompting institutions to review and improve their own processes. For example, under one EU project, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities visited Poland together to study a consultative committee model between central and local governments (Openaid, 2025). Both organisations benefited greatly and even betted on which country would establish such a committee first.

EU projects also offer strategic networking opportunities. Partnerships formed during a project can continue afterward if encouraged, opening doors to future collaborations and new business prospects. In one EU project, Giresun Municipality partnered with the Swedish city of Kalmar. Their museums began collaborating, and Kalmar’s well-regarded “time-travel” history-teaching method was transferred to Giresun. After the project ended, Giresun Municipality adapted a similar approach on Giresun Island, developing a tourism route with separate funding, and crafting tourism policies in collaboration with neighbouring provinces (Türkiye Turizm, 2010). Today the same team still drives numerous local-development projects in Giresun, applying their experience to further improve the city.

Access to finance is among the most attractive aspects of EU projects. Grants covering 70%–100% of budgets allow high-risk, high-potential ideas to proceed. Where institutional funding is scarce, EU projects provide vital support. For example, Türkiye’s Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation encouraged all municipalities to prepare smart-city action plans (Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, 2019). However, in the absence of a legal mandate, many municipalities hesitated to allocate funds. Çorum Municipality, by contrast, produced its Smart City Roadmap by the end of 2020 entirely through EU project funding (Çorum Municipality, 2020).

Managing an EU project offers learning and growth in project design, coordination, and financial management. The challenges encountered strengthen the institution’s problem-solving skills and better prepare them for future projects. For example, building on its experience in managing EU grants, UMT later launched idea competitions on themes such as zero waste, youth-friendly cities, accessible cities, animal-friendly cities, child-friendly cities, and smart cities – effectively integrating grant application methods into its regular workflow processes (Union of Municipalities of Türkiye, 2022, 2023).

EU projects often target public service improvement or social inclusion, ultimately delivering public benefit. When I began EU project work in 2011, I met peers from many cities and institutions who (through constant learning and skill growth with projects) now hold significant roles in their organisations. One story I always enjoy sharing during trainings comes from one of these colleagues. In 2018, I received a message on my phone from a friend in Bursa who had forwarded a note she had received: “Thank you, and thank you for the ISKEP Project. I was an unemployed woman five years ago. Now I run my own business and employ 5 other women!” That was one of those moments when you realise that a seemingly simple project indicator like “At least 25 women in each pilot municipality will start their own business” can turn into a powerful real-life story. A moment that fills you with pride and joy, knowing you helped make a difference. That’s one small step for humanity, but one giant leap for a once-unemployed woman in Bursa.

Turks say, “No rose without thorns!” EU projects have downsides too. Competition is fierce. Back in 2011 the IPA landscape was small, and even basic proposals could win grants. Over time, the sector expanded and proposal-writing capacity rose. Hundreds may apply for a single call, yet only a few receive funding, meaning even well-crafted proposals can fail. Rejected applications bring time and cost losses. Drafting a proposal, forming consortia, planning activities, and budgeting are lengthy and demanding. Still, no effort is wasted; each failure is a stepping-stone to success. EU projects involve complex reporting, audits, administrative tasks, and commitments that can overwhelm newcomers. During financial and final-report periods, beneficiaries may bombard the contracting authority and lead partner with hundreds of questions. Yet this too is a learning opportunity that accelerates administrative-capacity building.

To conclude, I’ve designed this *Manual* as a step-by-step guide for preparing EU projects. I believe that anyone who has never drafted an EU project can pick up this *Manual* and, by following it diligently, successfully complete both the *concept note* and *full application* forms. In the EU-project spirit, my aim is to achieve significant impact with a simple investment.

The Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said, “When a person dies, their deeds come to an end except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge from which people benefit, and a righteous child who prays for them” (An-Nawawī, 2014). However, I doubt the PRAG officials in Brussels will preserve the 2025 revision long enough for me to offset my mistakes with the good deeds this *Manual* might yield.

I hope you enjoyed reading.

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ANNEXES

Annex – I (Explanatory Note on Sample Proposal)

This sample proposal has been meticulously prepared to serve as a comprehensive guide for practitioners working with EU-funded projects, especially those under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Designed in response to an imaginary grant call titled “Green Cities Grant Programme,” launched by a fictional National Urbanization Agency, the sample proposal demonstrates real-life standards and structure while focusing on scoring criteria observed in IPA applications. Although many of the institutional names, locations, and data points are fictional, they are created carefully to simulate a highly realistic scenario to mirrors actual practices. The lead applicant in the proposal, on the other hand, is not a fictional municipality. Tirebolu is the author’s hometown, and a courtesy call was made to the municipality’s decision-makers, from whom kind approval and support were obtained.

The concept note and full application have been written in strict adherence to the latest PRAG 2025 template and evaluation logic. Font, formatting, page limits, and structural flow were initially respected exactly as per EU submission standards (Arial, font size 10), and the proposal is typed in the format provided by ePRAG. Only afterward, the text adjusted for readability and visual quality in the book layout.

One notable highlight of the sample proposal is the full integration of a 100% CO₂ offsetting model within the sustainability section. All anticipated emissions (from office operations to travel, equipment use, and even social media video views) have been calculated, costed and addressed through a verifiable offsetting plan. The emission calculation was conducted using various online CO₂ calculators and verified statistical sources. All relevant references are detailed in the accompanying table in that particular section.

Every section has been written with score maximization in mind. The language, structure, and content reflect real evaluation expectations.

Annex – II (Concept Note)

Title of the action:	Tirebolu Eco-Tourism Revitalization Project (Eco-Tirebolu)
[Number & title of lot]	N/A
Location(s) of the action:	<i>Tirebolu (Giresun) / Türkiye</i>
Name of the lead applicant	Tirebolu Municipality
Nationality of the lead applicant	Turkish

Dossier No	
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(for official use only)

EuropeAid ID	TR-2025-TIR-MUN001
Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	N/A
Ongoing contract number (if available)	N/A
Legal status	Local Authority
Co-applicant	Green Tirebolu Association; TR-2025-GTA-002; Türkiye, 15 May 2013; Non-Governmental Organization (Association); Local partner organization with thematic expertise in sustainable tourism and environment, collaborating with the lead applicant Tirebolu Municipality
Affiliated entity	N/A

Lead applicant's contact details for the purpose of this action	
Postal address:	Çarşı Mahallesi, Gazipaşa Cad. No: 198, 28500 Tirebolu / Giresun, Türkiye
Telephone number: (fixed and mobile) country code + city code + number	+90 454 411 4016
Fax number: country code + city code + number	+90 454 411 2077
Contact person for this action:	Mehmet Alparslan ÇANAKOĞLU
Contact person's email:	macanakoglu@tirebolu.bel.tr
Address:	Çarşı Mahallesi, Gazipaşa Cad. No: 198, 28500 Tirebolu / Giresun, Türkiye
Website of the lead applicant:	www.tirebolu.bel.tr

1.1. Summary of the action

Objectives of the action	<p><u>Overall objective is to</u> strengthen the institutional and strategic capacity of Tirebolu Municipality and local stakeholders for planning and managing sustainable urban tourism.</p> <p><u>Specific objective 1 is to</u> enhance local capacity for sustainable urban tourism planning.</p> <p><u>Specific objective 2 is to</u> increase market opportunities and stakeholder engagement.</p>
Final beneficiaries	Tirebolu's local community
Expected outputs	<p>Output 1.1. Municipal staff equipped and structures aligned for sustainable tourism governance.</p> <p>Output 1.2. Comprehensive urban tourism plan created through participatory, evidence-based process.</p> <p>Output 2.1. Local businesses gain skills and networks to deliver high-value sustainable tourism products.</p> <p>Output 2.2. Tirebolu's sustainable tourism brand gains visibility and attraction in target markets.</p>
Main activities	<p>1.1.1 SUT Ambassadors</p> <p>1.1.2. EU Study Mission</p> <p>1.1.3. Case-Clinic Workshop</p> <p>1.2.1. Local Lens Dialogues</p> <p>1.2.2. Drafting the Vision</p> <p>1.2.3. Plan in Progress</p> <p>2.1.1. Eco-Product Laboratory</p> <p>2.1.2. Finance for Growth</p> <p>2.1.3. EcoConnect Hub</p> <p>2.2.1. Start of the Journey</p> <p>2.2.2. See, Share, Sustain</p> <p>2.2.3. Legacy in Motion</p>
Target group(s)	Staff of key institutions, SMEs in Tirebolu

1.2. Description of the action (max 2 pages)

Background and Context Analysis

Tirebolu is a charming coastal town located in Giresun province, along the eastern Black Sea coast of Türkiye. With its historical landmarks, lush green hills, a coastal-walk lined with palm trees along the shore, and quite beaches, Tirebolu offers unique natural and cultural experience. The local economy is mainly based on agriculture, especially hazelnut and tea production. However, like many coastal towns, Tirebolu faces challenges such as youth migration and limited employment opportunities. In small towns like Tirebolu, developing tourism is essential to diversify the economy and create sustainable livelihoods. *At the national level*, Türkiye's tourism sector is a vital part of its economy. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (2024), Türkiye welcomed over 56 million tourists in 2023, generating over \$50 billion in revenue. However, mass tourism is concentrated in the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, leading to regional imbalances. Eco-tourism and cultural tourism remain underdeveloped due to weak local capacities, insufficient promotion and lack of sustainable infrastructure. *The Black Sea Region* also provides a rich setting for eco-tourism with its forests, mountains, rivers, and local traditions. Visitors mainly come from the Gulf Region and other cities in Türkiye. Key attractions include trekking routes and natural sites. Yet, the region faces challenges such as ecological degradation, unplanned development, and weak tourism coordination. Tirebolu holds a great potential in the Region but often bypassed by tourists heading to Trabzon or Rize. In early 2025, to address this specific challenge, the *Tirebolu Municipality* gathered the *Green Tirebolu Association* and the *Chamber of Small Business Owners and Artisans of Tirebolu* to explore tourism-based economic diversification. A preliminary meeting minutes followed, identifying eco-tourism gaps. Later, this call for proposals offered a real opportunity to act.

Objectives of the Action

The *overall objective* of the Eco-Tirebolu Project is to strengthen the institutional and strategic capacity of Tirebolu Municipality and local stakeholders for planning and managing sustainable urban tourism. This long-term will be contributing to the broader transformation of Tirebolu into a resilient and attractive destination that balances economic growth with cultural and environmental preservation. The project focuses on improving local decision-making, stakeholder coordination, and strategic planning to ensure the sustainable development of the tourism sector.

The specific objectives represent the project's concrete and achievable targets. *Specific Objective 1* is to enhance local capacity for sustainable urban tourism planning by equipping municipal staff and local actors with the necessary knowledge and skills for planning and governance. *Specific Objective 2* is to strengthen stakeholder collaboration and market engagement in support of sustainable tourism development. Second objective also outlines cooperation among local SMEs, encouraging the creation of new tourism products and services, and expanding access to wider markets.

Key Stakeholders and Consultations

On *25 April 2024*, Tirebolu Municipality, together with the Green Tirebolu Association and the Chamber of Commerce, held a *stakeholder consultation meeting* to present and discuss the proposed action. A stakeholder map had been developed in advance, identifying key actors from central government offices, local institutions, professional associations, NGOs, and sports clubs. Participants included the Directorate of Religious Affairs (for faith tourism), police (for safety), and public offices such as the Social Assistance Foundation, Youth and Sports Directorate, and Agriculture Directorate. Representatives from the university (Tirebolu Faculty of Communication), cooperatives, chambers, and local NGOs also joined. The overall *attitude towards the action* was highly positive. Stakeholders appreciated the focus on inclusive tourism and local development. As a *result of their feedback*, some project activities were slightly revised to better align with local needs.

Intervention Logic and Risks

The Eco-Tirebolu Project addresses two key challenges: low municipal planning capacity and limited stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism. To resolve these, the project delivers outputs such as staff training, international study visits, participatory planning, business workshops, and digital outreach. These outputs lead to outcomes including improved governance capacity and enhanced collaboration among local actors. When outcomes are sustained, they contribute to the long-term impact of transforming Tirebolu into a sustainable, attractive tourism destination, aligned with Türkiye’s tourism strategy and EU frameworks for inclusive local development and cultural preservation. The *theory of change* for the Eco-Tirebolu Project is given below to describe the intervention strategy.

IF municipal staff and local stakeholders receive targeted training, engage in participatory planning, and apply lessons from peer learning, **AND** local SMEs collaborate through business support tools and networking platforms, **THEN** Tirebolu’s planning capacity will be enhanced and stakeholder engagement in tourism development will improve. These strengthened capacities and partnerships will enable the municipality and local actors to develop and implement sustainable urban tourism plan effectively. **SO**, Tirebolu will transform into a sustainable and attractive coastal destination, contributing to inclusive economic growth with a sensitivity to long-term cultural and environmental preservation.

Risk Table			
Risk	Impact Level	Mitigation	Assumption
High staff turnover	High	Ensure documentation, assign backup staff, and involve multiple team members in training	Institutional knowledge is shared and roles are distributed internally
Local elections disrupt project flow	Moderate	Align key decisions with pre-election period, secure early political commitment	Elected officials remain supportive of the project post-election
Limited stakeholder engagement	High	Use early consultations, targeted invitations, and continuous follow-up	Stakeholders remain interested and view the project as relevant
Low participation in SME trainings	Moderate	Promote the benefits, co-design timing/content with SMEs, use local networks	SMEs are motivated and able to allocate time for training

Proposed Activities Overview

The Eco-Tirebolu Project’s activities are organized into *four main clusters*: in-house capacity building; planning and policy development; SMEs enhancement; and the visibility. Under *first cluster*, the project delivers a series of trainings, including the “SUT Ambassadors” programme, designed to improve local knowledge of sustainable tourism practices. The training then is complemented by an EU study mission and a case-clinic workshop, enabling peer learning and pooling best practices to benefit from. The *second cluster* focuses on participatory planning and policy development. Activities include the “Local Lens Dialogues” to gather diverse local input, followed by drafting sessions and then a public hearing activity titled “Plan in Progress”. For the *third cluster* targeting local business community, entrepreneurship support is provided through the “Eco-Product Laboratory”, financial out-reach training, and the establishment of the EcoConnect Hub, a coordination platform fostering collaboration among SMEs and policy institutions. The *fourth and final* cluster promotes project visibility and stakeholder involvement. Activities include a high-profile launch event “Start of the Journey”, influencer-led digital campaigns under “See, Share, Sustain”, and a closing conference titled “Legacy in Motion”. These activities collectively will lead to the creation and ownership of a *Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan* for Tirebolu.

Cross Cutting Issues Integration

Cross-cutting issues are essential values which should be integrated across all project activities. Eco-Tirebolu prioritizes cross-cutting issues by embedding democratic participation, gender equality, youth inclusion, good governance and environmental sustainability throughout implementation. Democracy is promoted through participatory activities like the Local Lens Dialogues, ensuring inclusive stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes. Good governance is supported via municipal staff training and capacity-building modules that strengthen transparency and strategic planning. Environmental sustainability is mainstreamed through the development of a Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan (SUTP), integrating conservation and low-impact tourism strategies. Gender equality is ensured by requiring a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in all training and consultation activities. Youth support is addressed by increasing economic activity in Tirebolu, thereby promoting youth employment and reducing outward migration.

Broad Timeframe and Factors

The project timetable respects key principles. SME trainings are held on Sundays to accommodate business schedules; public events align with tourism seasons; municipal activities avoid election periods; academic collaborations consider university calendars; weather conditions guide outdoor planning; and national and religious holidays are avoided to ensure maximum participation, operational efficiency, and contextual relevance throughout implementation. Nevertheless, in summer time, leveraging a religious holiday could significantly boost participation, as many individuals with roots in Tirebolu return from major cities and abroad during these periods. This option will be reassessed during the inception phase.

M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Incp.	1.1.1	1.1.2	1.1.3	1.2.1	1.2.2	2.1.1	2.1.2		1.2.3	2.1.3	Ext.
	2.2.1	2.2.2									2.2.3
Planning		Executing								Closing	
Monitoring & Controll											

1.3. Relevance of the Action (max 3 pages)

Relevance to Objectives and Sectors

The overall objective of the call for proposals is to strengthen local governance and inclusive local development through participatory planning and stakeholder engagement. Eco-Tirebolu supports this objective by enhancing the institutional and strategic capacity of Tirebolu Municipality and local actors to jointly develop and implement a Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan (SUTP). One second objective of the call is to promote integrated approaches that foster local economic growth while ensuring environmental sustainability. The project contributes directly to S.O.2 of the CfP by combining participatory planning, business support mechanisms and sustainability-oriented tourism development.

Two priorities of the call include building municipal capacities for long-term strategic planning and improving stakeholder coordination mechanisms at the local level. Eco-Tirebolu Project enhances municipal planning skills and promotes local stakeholder coordination through inclusive tourism development. The action is also particularly relevant to the subthemes of participatory governance, place-based economic development, and civil society engagement.

The project addresses expected results at all levels: impact is pursued through local economic revitalization; outcomes include enhanced planning and stakeholder engagement capacity; and outputs involve the delivery of concrete tools such as training, planning documents, and engagement platforms.

Pre-project Situation Analysis

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's 2023 report, Türkiye is one of the top global destinations for tourism, with over 56 million visitors and \$54 billion in revenue. While the country has long promoted sun-sea-sand tourism in its southern regions, it has also identified nature-based tourism as a strategic area for sustainable growth. Türkiye's diverse geography, rich biodiversity, and four-season climate offer a strong foundation for ecotourism, especially in underutilized regions. According to the Eastern Black Sea Development Agency's 2022 Tourism Report, the Eastern Black Sea region has seen a sharp rise in ecotourism, particularly from Gulf countries. In 2023, Trabzon (50 minutes to Tirebolu) alone hosted over 268,000 visitors in July, with a 112% increase in foreign tourists compared to the previous year. The region's appeal lies in its green landscapes, highlands, clean air, and cooler summer climate, which position the Region as a top ecotourism destination. Tirebolu, located on the eastern coast of Giresun, has five 3-star hotels, a historic coastal fortress, and a scenic seafront lined with cafés and restaurants. During summer, its population nearly doubles, as many former residents return from cities like İstanbul and Ankara. Tourists primarily visit from nearby provinces, especially for beach-camping. The town features sandy beaches, hazelnut groves, and surrounding highlands suitable for nature-based tourism. Tirebolu's tourism is mainly seasonal but carries a potential of 4 season tourism.

Problem Analysis

Tirebolu faces several interrelated challenges hindering its tourism-based economic development. Despite its scenic coast and rich cultural assets, the town receives little benefit from the growing Gulf tourism in the Black Sea region, as it is often bypassed in favour of more prominent destinations. While tour buses usually pass through Tirebolu without stopping, individual travelers often take a short break in the town, primarily to enjoy its famously renowned pide. Limited institutional capacity and constrained municipal resources restrict effective tourism planning and service delivery. In addition, collaboration among local actors (such as municipalities, chambers, and civil society organizations) exist but remains weak, reducing the town's ability to coordinate efforts or leverage regional tourism flows. There is limited data sharing among institutions, which hinders joint analysis

and strategic planning. As a result, integrated tourism *policies at the regional level are lacking* due to not being supported from local level and so smaller towns like Tirebolu are left unsupported. While local products such as hazelnuts, nettle, and seafood exist, they are sold with *low value-added* processing, limiting their economic impact. The town's tourism *visibility* remains low, and its potential is underutilized. These factors collectively reinforce *economic stagnation* and *youth outmigration*.

Relevance to Plans

Locally, Eco-Tirebolu complements Tirebolu Municipality's 5-year Strategic Plan which includes goals related to environmental protection and local economic development. At the *regional level*, project supports the Eastern Black Sea Development Agency's 2022–2026 Plan, which prioritizes ecotourism and cultural heritage promotion. At the *national level*, the project also aligns with the Türkiye Tourism Strategy 2023–2028, which emphasizes eco-tourism and related SME development. At the *European Union* level, the project aligns with the European Green Deal through its emphasis on environmental sustainability and low-impact tourism. At the *global level*, the project aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda by contributing to SDG 8 and SDG 11. Project also contributes to Paris Agenda as well as the New Urban Agenda.

Where the Action is the Continuation or Part of a Larger Programme

This project is not a continuation of another programme but complements existing policies at local, regional, national, European, and global levels. While not currently part of a larger plan, if funded, Eco-Tirebolu will be part of EU funded "Sustainable Cities Grant Programme" which is coordinated by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change where the National Urbanization Agency is the end-beneficiary.

EU Initiative Complementarity

The project aligns with the EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy, Transition Pathway for Tourism, and the Green Deal by promoting eco-tourism and local resilience. Project's complements initiatives like DETOUR (Interreg) and the EU–Türkiye Climate Change Grant Programme, which support capacity of local actors and climate-friendly infrastructure. These efforts collectively support sustainable, inclusive tourism development across local and regional levels. However, Eco-Tirebolu addresses critical local gaps that are not covered by those initiatives. Unlike broader regional or infrastructure-focused programmes, this project delivers a place-based, participatory tourism planning process tailored specifically to Tirebolu's unique social, cultural, and environmental context. Therefore, a funding for this action is essential to ensure a coherent, bottom-up implementation of EU tourism and climate goals in underrepresented, small-scale geographies like Tirebolu.

Description of Target Groups and Final Beneficiaries

The target groups of the action are composed of *municipal personnel, volunteers, chamber representatives, and local businesses* directly engaged in or affected by tourism development. The Municipality of Tirebolu employs 150 staff, of which approximately 25% hold university degrees, and 30% are women. Staff are distributed across administrative, planning, and service units, with limited prior experience in tourism project management. The Green Tirebolu Association includes 12 active volunteers, mostly aged 25–40, with backgrounds in environmental activism and community mobilization. The Chamber of Commerce has one permanent staff member responsible for SME outreach. Tirebolu hosts around 400 local businesses, largely micro and small enterprises. These include family-run bakeries, neighborhood markets, artisanal product makers (e.g., hazelnut sweets, fish preserves), guesthouses, and small eateries. Of these, only 30 are women-owned, reflecting gender gaps in entrepreneurship. Business owners are typically aged between 40 and 60, with many having no formal tourism or digital marketing training. Most operate seasonally and depend on word-of-mouth or informal promotion, indicating high potential for capacity building.

The project's final beneficiaries are the approximately *20,000 residents of Tirebolu*. Demographically, the population is aging, with a significant proportion of retirees. Some residents returned after long professional careers in metropolitan cities and possess valuable skills and networks. Others, particularly in the inner neighbourhoods, have lower education levels and limited formal employment. Youth outmigration remains high due to limited job opportunities. The town's socio-economic base is reliant on agriculture (primarily hazelnuts), fishing, and informal trade. The project aims to enhance community well-being by diversifying income, revitalizing cultural identity, and making the town more vibrant and attractive for all residents.

Their needs and constraints

Municipal staff in Tirebolu face capacity limitations in strategic tourism planning, stakeholder coordination, and cross-sectoral implementation. Many lack specialized training in sustainable tourism governance and have minimal exposure to national or international best practices. Their current roles are mostly operational, and inter-unit communication is weak. Volunteers from local associations seek structured roles in tourism-related planning but often lack access to formal knowledge, policy dialogues, or networking opportunities. Chamber representatives are constrained by limited resources and outreach tools to support small enterprises. Local businesses struggle with developing marketable tourism products, branding, and navigating financial tools or public support schemes. Women-owned businesses face additional barriers in visibility and access to networks. Across all actors, there is a lack of collaboration, data-sharing, and participatory mechanisms that hinder coordinated efforts. Digital engagement skills are low, and opportunities for peer learning or content co-creation are scarce. These constraints limit the Town's capacity to shape and benefit from tourism-driven development.

Tirebolu's residents, particularly older adults and returnees from larger cities, express a desire for cultural preservation and improved local amenities. However, limited tourism activity reduces incentives for investment in public services, cultural events, or heritage conservation. Informally organized community life and weak tourism promotion make it difficult for residents to participate in or benefit from economic diversification. Youth and low-income groups are constrained by limited employment options, low exposure to new skills, and absence of meaningful cultural or creative engagement. Seasonal stagnation reduces year-round income flow and narrows livelihood resilience. The socio-economic divide between returnee professionals and lower-educated locals creates challenges for cohesive community development. Local knowledge remains underutilized, and there are few accessible platforms for public expression or cultural storytelling. Environmental assets are valued but not leveraged for income generation or recreation. Residents seek greater social participation, intergenerational exchange, and pride in Tirebolu's unique identity through community-driven change.

Relevance of proposal

The Eco-Tirebolu Project is designed to respond directly to the specific needs and constraints of both institutional actors and the wider community in Tirebolu. The project's relevance is grounded in its practical and structured approach, focusing on capacity development, participatory planning, stakeholder engagement, and improved visibility for local tourism assets.

To *address the limited municipal planning capacity*, the project introduces a set of targeted trainings under the capacity building cluster. The "SUT Ambassadors" programme introduces sustainable tourism principles to municipal staff and other key stakeholders. The training covers planning tools, tourism governance, and destination management. It is followed by a study visit to Europe where selected participants are exposed to examples of successful small-town tourism practices. A case-clinic workshop brings this learning back to Tirebolu through interactive sessions that apply those examples to local challenges. These activities are tailored to equip the staff and volunteers with the knowledge and confidence to take on a strategic role in tourism development.

For the constraint of low coordination among local institutions and actors, the project establishes the EcoConnect Hub. This will be a multi-stakeholder platform where public institutions, private businesses, and civil society organizations meet three-monthly. The hub will allow for continued dialogue, policy alignment, and joint initiatives. It will then build a culture of cooperation and contributes to a more cohesive tourism ecosystem.

In response to weak collaboration between business owners and lack of capacity in product development, the project runs the “Eco-Product Laboratory.” The activity includes workshops and co-design activities with artisans, guesthouse operators, and other local producers. The agenda focuses on sustainable product development and storytelling, tailored to Tirebolu’s heritage and nature. Complementary to this activity, the “Finance for Growth” training introduces micro-finance, grant options, and proposal writing to local businesses. The activity targets small enterprises, especially those led by women, and supports them in accessing funds and improving business planning.

For outreach and visibility, the project launches the “Start of the Journey” opening event. This is followed by a digital media campaign titled “See, Share, Sustain,” in which influencers produce content about Tirebolu’s cultural, natural, and gastronomic appeal. Young people are involved in shaping these stories to ensure relevance to wider audiences.

All activities culminate in the drafting of a Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan through the participatory “Local Lens Dialogues,” drafting workshops, and a public hearing titled “Plan in Progress.” The “Legacy in Motion” closing event showcases the results and provides space for partners to renew their commitments. The project brings local institutions, businesses, and residents together through a shared and structured journey, directly shaped around their existing challenges and future aspirations.

Participatory involvement process

The Eco-Tirebolu Project was designed through participatory consultations with municipal staff, SMEs, and local CSOs. Focus groups and interviews, identified needs that shaped activities like the SUT Ambassadors training and Eco-Product Laboratory. During implementation, inclusive mechanisms such as the EcoConnect Hub and a multi-stakeholder Steering Committee will ensure ongoing dialogue. Feedback from dialogues, working breakfasts, and site visits will guide adaptive decisions, developing shared ownership and locally rooted sustainable tourism development.

Particular added-value elements

The project promotes public-private partnerships through the establishment of the EcoConnect Hub, where municipal institutions, SMEs, and civil society organizations meet regularly to coordinate sustainable tourism actions. Eco-Tirebolu enables innovation by supporting the co-creation of new local tourism products under the Eco-Product Laboratory, encouraging unique, high-value offers tailored to Tirebolu’s identity. The action also integrates best practice by incorporating lessons from an EU study visit and applying them through the Case-Clinic Workshop and participatory plan drafting sessions.

1.4. Lead applicant, (co-applicants and affiliated entities, if any)

Name of the lead applicant	Tirebolu Municipality
EuropeAid ID	TR-2025-TIR-MUN001
Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	N/A
Nationality/ Country and date of registration	Turkish / Republic of Türkiye, 13 October 1965
Legal status	Local authority

Lead applicant contact details for the purpose of this action	
Postal address of the organisation:	Çarşı Mahallesi, Gazipaşa Cad. No: 198, 28500 Tirebolu / Giresun, Türkiye
Organisation email address:	Info@tirebolu.bel.tr
Telephone: (fixed and mobile) Country code + city code + number	+90 454 411 4016
Fax: Country code + city code + number	+90 454 411 2077
Contact person for this action:	Mehmet Alparslan ÇANAKOĞLU
Postal address:	Çarşı Mahallesi, Gazipaşa Cad. No: 198, 28500 Tirebolu / Giresun, Türkiye
Contact person's email:	macanakoglu@tirebolu.bel.tr
Co-applicant(s)	
Name of the co-applicant	Green Tirebolu Association
EuropeAid ID	TR-2025-GTA-002
Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	N/A
Nationality/ Country and date of registration	Turkish / Republic of Türkiye, 15 May 2013
Legal status	Civil Society Organization
Affiliated entity(es)	
Name of the Affiliated entity	
EuropeAid ID	
Nationality / country and date of registration	
Legal status:	
Specify to which entity you are affiliated (lead applicant and/or the co-applicant). Specify the kind of affiliation you have with that entity. Specify its status	

1.5. Project details

Title of the action:	Tirebolu Eco-Tourism Revitalization Project (Eco-Tirebolu)		
[Lot number you are applying to:]	N/A		
Location(s) of the action:	<i>Tirebolu (Giresun) / Türkiye</i>		
Total duration of the action (months):	<i>12 Months</i>		
Requested EU contribution as an amount and as a percentage of the total eligible costs of the action (<i>indicative</i>) (only necessary where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs, entirely or partially)	[Reimbursement of costs]	EUR <90000>	<90>%
	[Financing not linked to costs]	EUR <...>	N/A
	[Total requested EU contribution]	EUR <90000>	N/A
Total indicative budget	<100000> EUR		

2. Checklist – Concept Note – For Self-Guidance

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA (To be filled in by the lead applicant)	
<u>Name of the lead applicant</u>	Tirebolu Municipality
EuropeAid ID number Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	TR-2025-TIR-MUN001
Nationality/country and date of registration	Turkish / Republic of Türkiye, 13 October 1965
Legal status	Local Authority
<u>Co-applicant</u>	
Name of the co-applicant	Green Tirebolu Association
EuropeAid ID number Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	TR-2025-GTA-002
Nationality/country and date of registration	Turkish / Republic of Türkiye, 15 May 2013
Legal status:	Civil Society Organization
<u>Affiliated entity</u>	
Name of the affiliated entity	
EuropeAid ID number	
Nationality/country and date of registration	
Legal status:	
Specify to which entity you are affiliated (lead applicant and/or the co-applicant). Specify the kind of affiliation you have with that entity. Specify status.	

BEFORE SENDING YOUR CONCEPT NOTE, PLEASE CHECK THAT EACH OF THE CRITERIA BELOW HAVE BEEN MET IN FULL AND TICK THEM OFF	Tick the items off below	
Title of the proposal:	Yes	No
PART 1 (ADMINISTRATIVE)		
1. The instructions for the concept note have been followed.	√	
2. The declaration by the lead applicant has been filled in and signed.	√	
3. The proposal is typed and is in English.	√	
4. One original and 2 copies are included.	√	
5. An electronic version of the concept note is enclosed.	√	
PART 2 (ELIGIBILITY)		
6. The action will be implemented in an eligible country and in the minimum required number of eligible regions.	√	
7. The duration of the action is between 8 and 12 (the minimum and maximum allowed).	√	
8. The requested contribution is between the minimum and maximum allowed.	√	
9. The declaration by the lead applicant has been filled in and sent with the concept note.	√	

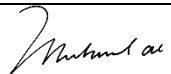
3. DECLARATION BY THE LEAD APPLICANT (CONCEPT NOTE)

The lead applicant, represented by the undersigned, being the authorised signatory of the lead applicant, and in the context of the present application, representing any co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies) in the proposed action, hereby declares that:

- the lead applicant undertakes to comply with the obligations laid down in the affiliated entities' statement of the grant application form and with the principles of good partnership practice;
- the lead applicant is directly responsible for the preparation, management and implementation of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), if any, and is not acting as an intermediary;
- the co-applicants and affiliated entities (if any) in this application have given their consent to be included and the lead applicant can provide proof of that consent immediately upon request from the contracting authority;
- the lead applicant, the co-applicant(s) and the affiliated entity(ies) are not in any of the situations excluding them from participating in contracts which are listed in Section 2.4.2. of the practical guide (available from the following Internet address: <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/2.+Basic+rules;>)
- the lead applicant, the co-applicant(s) and the affiliated entity(ies) are not in detected in EU restrictive measures as laid down in Section 2.4.1. of the practical guide;
- the lead applicant and each co-applicant and affiliated entity are in a position to deliver immediately, upon request, the supporting documents stipulated under Section 2.2. of the guidelines for applicants;
- the lead applicant and each co-applicant and affiliated entity (if any) are eligible in accordance with the criteria set out under Sections 2.1.1. of the guidelines for applicants;
- if recommended to be awarded a grant, the lead applicant, the co-applicant(s) and the affiliated entity(ies) accept the contractual conditions as laid down in the standard grant contract annexed to the guidelines for applicants (Annex G) (or the Contribution Agreement where the lead applicant is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission);

We acknowledge that if we participate in spite of being in any of the situations listed in Section 2.4. of the practical guide or if the declarations or information provided prove to be false we may be subject to rejection from this procedure and to exclusion decisions and/or financial penalties up to 10 % of the total estimated value of the grant being awarded and that this information may be published on the Commission website in accordance with the Financial Regulation in force. We are aware that, for the purposes of safeguarding the EU's financial interests, our personal data may be transferred to internal audit services, to the early detection and exclusion system, to the European Court of Auditors, to the European Public Prosecutor's Office or to the European Anti-Fraud Office.

Signed on behalf of the lead applicant

Name	İrfan DEMİROĞLU
Signature	
Position	Mayor
Date	12.05.2024

Annex – III (Full Application Form)

1. General information

Reference of the call for proposals	EuropeAid/193872/ID/ACT/TR
Title of the call for proposals	Green Cities Grant Programme
Name of the lead applicant	Tirebolu Municipality
Number of the proposal	[192]
Title of the action	Tirebolu Eco-Tourism Revitalization Project (Eco-Tirebolu)
Location of the action	Tirebolu (Giresun) / Türkiye
Duration of the action	12 months
[Number of the lot]	N/A

2. The Action

2.1. Description of the action

2.1.1. Description (max 18 pages)

Relevance to Objectives and Sectors

The overall objective of the call for proposals is to strengthen local governance and inclusive local development through participatory planning and stakeholder engagement. Eco-Tirebolu supports this objective by enhancing the institutional and strategic capacity of Tirebolu Municipality and local actors to jointly develop and implement a Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan (SUTP). One second objective of the call is to promote integrated approaches that foster local economic growth while ensuring environmental sustainability. The project contributes directly to S.O.2 of the CfP by combining participatory planning, business support mechanisms and sustainability-oriented tourism development.

Two priorities of the call include building municipal capacities for long-term strategic planning and improving stakeholder coordination mechanisms at the local level. Eco-Tirebolu Project enhances municipal planning skills and promotes local stakeholder coordination through inclusive tourism development. The action is also particularly relevant to the subthemes of participatory governance, place-based economic development, and civil society engagement.

The project addresses expected results at all levels: impact is pursued through local economic revitalization; outcomes include enhanced planning and stakeholder engagement capacity; and outputs involve the delivery of concrete tools such as training, planning documents, and engagement platforms.

Conceptual Framework (Ecotourism)

Ecotourism is a form of tourism centred around experiencing nature while adhering to principles of environmental sustainability. Since the 1990s, it has emerged as a rapidly expanding sector within the global tourism industry. This growth is primarily driven by shifts in international tourism demand, rising education levels, and an increasing public awareness of and concern for environmental issues. Recognizing its global relevance, the United Nations declared 2002 the “International Year of Ecotourism”. Similarly, in 2011, the UN designated the year as the “International Year of Forests” to emphasize the role of forests in sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Rural areas are commonly defined as territories beyond urban centres, including small settlements such as town and villages where agriculture and other land-based activities are predominant. These regions, rich in natural and cultural resources, have long catered to the leisure needs of urban populations. Many city dwellers travel to rural areas for short getaways or family visits, drawn by the appeal of rural life, the absence of urban stressors, and a desire for relaxation. This growing trend has given rise to rural tourism, a broad concept encompassing multiple subtypes such as farm tourism, village tourism, highland tourism, agro-tourism, and ecotourism.

Experts in tourism studies highlight the difficulty of defining rural tourism due to its varied expressions and contexts (Uzumcu and Koc, 2017). According to the European Union, rural tourism refers to holidaymaking in rural areas that showcases the heritage and lifestyle of the countryside (Sajn and Finer, 2023). This typically involves leisure activities undertaken by urban residents in rural settings, either domestically or internationally. These activities can range from long vacations in remote regions to short afternoon excursions nearby. The motivations for rural tourism are similarly

diverse — ranging from cultural exploration and sports activities to emotional connections with family heritage.

Another widely accepted definition describes rural tourism as the travel of individuals to rural communities for the purpose of experiencing traditional life and participating in local customs and events. The definition often includes temporary accommodation and direct interaction with the local environment and residents. This form of tourism provides economic opportunities for agricultural producers through the sale of goods and services aligned with the character of the region.

Key features of ecotourism include: a traveler profile inclined toward cultural and natural discovery; locations typically in natural reserves or heritage sites; low-impact environmental activities; the use of eco-friendly technologies; and development models that blend economic advancement with conservation goals. Successful ecotourism initiatives involve inclusive processes, ensure minimal harm to local communities and ecosystems, and deliver tangible economic benefits to the host populations.

In Türkiye, ecotourism has significant potential due to the country's rich ecological and cultural landscapes. Tirebolu, in particular, offers an ideal environment for ecotourism, with its combination of organic agriculture, rural lifestyles, and tourism activities, presenting a compelling case for sustainable rural development.

Pre-project Situation Analysis (Region and Country)

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's 2023 report, *Türkiye* is one of the top global destinations for tourism, with over 56 million visitors and \$54 billion in revenue. While the country has long promoted sun-sea-sand tourism in its southern regions, it has also identified nature-based tourism as a strategic area for sustainable growth. Türkiye's diverse geography, rich biodiversity, and four-season climate offer a strong foundation for ecotourism, especially in underutilized regions. According to the Eastern Black Sea Development Agency's 2022 Tourism Report, the *Eastern Black Sea region* has seen a sharp rise in ecotourism, particularly from Gulf countries. In 2023, Trabzon (50 minutes to Tirebolu) alone hosted over 268,000 visitors in July, with a 112% increase in foreign tourists compared to the previous year. The region's appeal lies in its green landscapes, highlands, clean air, and cooler summer climate, which position the Region as a top ecotourism destination. *Tirebolu*, located on the eastern coast of Giresun, has five 3-star hotels, a historic coastal fortress, and a scenic seafront lined with cafés and restaurants. During summer, its population nearly doubles, as many former residents return from cities like İstanbul and Ankara. Tourists primarily visit from nearby provinces, especially for beach-camping. The town features sandy beaches, hazelnut groves, and surrounding highlands suitable for nature-based tourism. Tirebolu's tourism is mainly seasonal but carries a potential of 4 season tourism.

Economy of Tirebolu

Tirebolu's economy is predominantly agricultural, with a strong dependence on hazelnut, tea, and corn production. Located in the Eastern Black Sea region of Türkiye, Tirebolu benefits from a mild and humid climate and fertile soils, making it suitable for a range of crops. However, despite its potential, the local economy remains narrowly focused, with hazelnuts accounting for the largest share of agricultural activity. Approximately 36% of the Town's land (148,890 decares) is dedicated to hazelnut orchards, producing an annual yield of around 12,500 tons which makes hazelnuts the cornerstone of both household income and the broader economic structure. Corn and tea cultivation follow in significance, with 20,000 decares and 8,000 decares respectively. Tirebolu produces 3,500 tons of corn and over 14,000 tons of tea annually (including both fresh and dried forms). The tea

grown in Tirebolu, commonly known as “42” among locals, stands out as one of the two most prominent national brands of the Town (the other being Tirebolu pide).

Despite the suitable conditions for diversification, agricultural activity remains relatively concentrated. As a result, the economy is highly sensitive to fluctuations in hazelnut yields, which often leads to periodic economic stagnation in years of poor harvest. To address this vulnerability, studies have proposed the development of alternative agricultural practices such as beekeeping, livestock farming, greenhouse vegetable production, strawberry cultivation, and even silkworm breeding. Initiatives launched under the leadership of the District Directorate of Agriculture since 1994 have begun to bear fruit, particularly in the areas of kiwi, strawberry, and greenhouse vegetable production, with pilot sites now entering productive phases. These efforts are supported by Ziraat Bankası (national agricultural bank) and four agricultural credit cooperatives operating in the region.

Livestock farming, although present, is underdeveloped relative to the available land and potential. Despite large areas of pastureland (approximately 90,000 decares), neither pasture-based nor barn-based animal husbandry has reached significant commercial scale. The total livestock inventory includes around 3,000 sheep, 2,950 cattle, and 2,000 mules, while poultry farming remains marginal. Beekeeping, however, is an emerging sector, with approximately 4,000 active beehives in the Town. The lack of cooperatives and processing facilities for livestock products remains a major constraint to expansion in this sector.

Fisheries also contribute modestly to the local economy. Situated on the Black Sea coast, Tirebolu supports small-scale marine fishing activities. Annual catches include 35,000 kg of anchovy, 34,500 kg of whiting, 30,000 kg of garfish, and smaller quantities of species like red mullet and bonito. However, the absence of large-scale fish processing or cold storage facilities limits the growth potential of this sector.

In addition to agriculture and fisheries, forestry is a significant land use in Tirebolu. The district falls under the administration of the Tirebolu Forestry Directorate, which manages forest activities across five districts, covering an area of 133,856 hectares. Of this, nearly 49,000 hectares are classified as forested land, with the remainder being open or degraded areas. Although the forestry sector does not currently make a large contribution to local employment, still remains important in environmental and land use planning.

The district also has a modest industrial base, largely tied to agriculture. The most significant industrial establishment is a state-owned tea processing plant operated by ÇAYKUR, which employs around 330 people and serves over 14,000 tea producers. The plant operates at full capacity between May and June and at reduced capacity until October. Another key facility is the hazelnut processing and storage facility operated by FISKOBIRLIK (an agricultural sales cooperative union formed by hazelnut producers), with the capacity to process 21,000 tons of hazelnuts annually and a storage capacity of 14,050 tons. Additionally, four privately owned tea factories and two hazelnut cracking plants are in operation.

In terms of financial infrastructure, Tirebolu is served by branches of major banks including Ziraat Bankası, İş Bankası, Halk Bankası, and Akbank, supporting both agricultural and commercial activities through loans and financial services.

In summary, Tirebolu's economy is agriculturally driven, centered around hazelnut and tea production, with emerging sectors in beekeeping and greenhouse farming. However, limited diversification, underutilized livestock potential, and infrastructure gaps in tourism and agribusiness continue to constrain the local economic development.

Tourism in Tirebolu

Tirebolu, a coastal town located on Türkiye's Black Sea shore, holds notable potential in the areas of cultural heritage, natural beauty, and tourism development. Surrounded by densely forested hills and offering uninterrupted sea views, the town presents a unique geographical and historical setting that remains relatively undiscovered in comparison to other destinations in the Region.

Historically, Tirebolu is home to two significant castles. The first, Senjan (Central) Castle, is situated on a small peninsula in the town centre. With its preserved battlements, staircases, and ancient storage chambers, it overlooks the harbour and offers a panoramic perspective of the coastline. The second, Bedrama Castle, located approximately 15 kilometres inland in Örenkaya village, was originally constructed to defend the silver-mining city of Argyria. This structure has passed through different ruling hands over the centuries, reflecting the layered history of the region.

The urban fabric of Tirebolu features Ottoman-era fountains, 19th-century mansions, and narrow streets where architectural and cultural traces remain visible. Religious and civil buildings such as the Yeniköy Mosque (with a minaret dated to 1880) the traditional public bath (hamam), and a small historical fishermen bakery located on an offshore islet, contribute to the town's historic character.

In terms of natural assets, Tirebolu offers a coastal strip decorated by coves and beaches, directly backed by green slopes. During the summer, the town experiences a temporary population increase due to returning residents from cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, as well as visitors from the Turkish diaspora in Europe and North America. Additionally, there is a consistent influx of tourists from inland provinces such as Tokat, Erzurum, and Sivas, many of whom prefer camping along the coast. This seasonal pattern contributes to a temporary revitalization of the local economy.

Tirebolu's coastline includes several publicly accessible beaches, some of which meet blue flag criteria. The town centre beach is a commonly visited area due to its proximity and accessibility. Other beaches such as Beygir Kumu (4 km), Uzunkum (5 km), and Yılgin, Küçükçay, Bada, and Kaynarca beaches are used for daily visits, camping, or photography. These beaches differ in landscape (some sandy, some pebbled) but remain open to the public year-round. In recent years, a number of private beach clubs have been established, including Bada Beach Club and My Sunset Beach. These venues, with modest entry fees, offer music and food services and have become preferred gathering places particularly among younger visitors.

Beyond the coastline, Tirebolu's highland areas such as Kazıkbeli, Güvende, and Yaşmaklı resemble the scenery of the Alps. These highland settlements host local festivals that feature traditional music, food, and folk dances. These events play a role in preserving local traditions and offer opportunities for social gathering. In addition, the region's biodiversity supports specific forms of niche tourism such as birdwatching.

While existing tourism infrastructure in Tirebolu remains limited (particularly in terms of accommodation and organized services) the combination of historical assets, natural features, and cultural continuity provides a remarkable opportunity for sustainable tourism development.

Problem Analysis

Tirebolu faces several interrelated challenges hindering its tourism-based economic development. Despite its scenic coast and rich cultural assets, the town receives little benefit from the growing Gulf tourism in the Black Sea region, as it is *often bypassed* in favour of more prominent destinations. While tour buses usually pass through Tirebolu without stopping, individual travelers often take a short break in the town, primarily to enjoy its famously renowned pide. Limited *institutional capacity*

and constrained municipal resources restrict effective tourism planning and service delivery. In addition, collaboration among local actors (such as municipalities, chambers, and civil society organizations) exist but remains weak, reducing the town's ability to coordinate efforts or leverage regional tourism flows. There is limited data sharing among institutions, which hinders joint analysis and strategic planning. As a result, integrated tourism policies at the regional level are lacking due to not being supported from local level and so smaller towns like Tirebolu are left unsupported. While local products such as hazelnuts, nettle, and seafood exist, they are sold with low value-added processing, limiting their economic impact. The town's tourism visibility remains low, and its potential is underutilized. These factors collectively reinforce economic stagnation and youth outmigration.

EU Initiative Complementarity

The project aligns with the EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy, Transition Pathway for Tourism, and the Green Deal by promoting eco-tourism and local resilience. Project's complements initiatives like DETOUR (Interreg) and the EU–Türkiye Climate Change Grant Programme, which support capacity of local actors and climate-friendly infrastructure. These efforts collectively support sustainable, inclusive tourism development across local and regional levels. However, Eco-Tirebolu addresses critical local gaps that are not covered by those initiatives. Unlike broader regional or infrastructure-focused programmes, this project delivers a place-based, participatory tourism planning process tailored specifically to Tirebolu's unique social, cultural, and environmental context. Therefore, a funding for this action is essential to ensure a coherent, bottom-up implementation of EU tourism and climate goals in underrepresented, small-scale geographies like Tirebolu.

Description of Target Groups and Final Beneficiaries

The target groups of the action are composed of municipal personnel, volunteers, chamber representatives, and local businesses directly engaged in or affected by tourism development. The Municipality of Tirebolu employs 150 staff, of which approximately 25% hold university degrees, and 30% are women. Staff are distributed across administrative, planning, and service units, with limited prior experience in tourism project management. The Green Tirebolu Association includes 12 active volunteers, mostly aged 25–40, with backgrounds in environmental activism and community mobilization. The Chamber of Commerce has one permanent staff member responsible for SME outreach. Tirebolu hosts around 400 local businesses, largely micro and small enterprises. These include family-run bakeries, neighborhood markets, artisanal product makers (e.g., hazelnut sweets, fish preserves), guesthouses, and small eateries. Of these, only 30 are women-owned, reflecting gender gaps in entrepreneurship. Business owners are typically aged between 40 and 60, with many having no formal tourism or digital marketing training. Most operate seasonally and depend on word-of-mouth or informal promotion, indicating high potential for capacity building.

The project's final beneficiaries are the approximately 20,000 residents of Tirebolu. Demographically, the population is aging, with a significant proportion of retirees. Some residents returned after long professional careers in metropolitan cities and possess valuable skills and networks. Others, particularly in the inner neighbourhoods, have lower education levels and limited formal employment. Youth outmigration remains high due to limited job opportunities. The town's socio-economic base is reliant on agriculture (primarily hazelnuts), fishing, and informal trade. The project aims to enhance community well-being by diversifying income, revitalizing cultural identity, and making the town more vibrant and attractive for all residents.

Their needs and constraints

Municipal staff in Tirebolu face capacity limitations in strategic tourism planning, stakeholder coordination, and cross-sectoral implementation. Many lack specialized training in sustainable tourism governance and have minimal exposure to national or international best practices. Their current roles

are mostly operational, and inter-unit communication is weak. Volunteers from local associations seek structured roles in tourism-related planning but often lack access to formal knowledge, policy dialogues, or networking opportunities. Chamber representatives are constrained by limited resources and outreach tools to support small enterprises. Local businesses struggle with developing marketable tourism products, branding, and navigating financial tools or public support schemes. Women-owned businesses face additional barriers in visibility and access to networks. Across all actors, there is a lack of collaboration, data-sharing, and participatory mechanisms that hinder coordinated efforts. Digital engagement skills are low, and opportunities for peer learning or content co-creation are scarce. These constraints limit the Town's capacity to shape and benefit from tourism-driven development.

Tirebolu's residents, particularly older adults and returnees from larger cities, express a desire for cultural preservation and improved local amenities. However, limited tourism activity reduces incentives for investment in public services, cultural events, or heritage conservation. Informally organized community life and weak tourism promotion make it difficult for residents to participate in or benefit from economic diversification. Youth and low-income groups are constrained by limited employment options, low exposure to new skills, and absence of meaningful cultural or creative engagement. Seasonal stagnation reduces year-round income flow and narrows livelihood resilience. The socio-economic divide between returnee professionals and lower-educated locals creates challenges for cohesive community development. Local knowledge remains underutilized, and there are few accessible platforms for public expression or cultural storytelling. Environmental assets are valued but not leveraged for income generation or recreation. Residents seek greater social participation, intergenerational exchange, and pride in Tirebolu's unique identity through community-driven change.

Relevance of proposal

The Eco-Tirebolu Project is designed to respond directly to the specific needs and constraints of both institutional actors and the wider community in Tirebolu. The project's relevance is grounded in its practical and structured approach, focusing on capacity development, participatory planning, stakeholder engagement, and improved visibility for local tourism assets.

To address the limited municipal planning capacity, the project introduces a set of targeted trainings under the capacity building cluster. The "SUT Ambassadors" programme introduces sustainable tourism principles to municipal staff and other key stakeholders. The training covers planning tools, tourism governance, and destination management. It is followed by a study visit to Europe where selected participants are exposed to examples of successful small-town tourism practices. A case-clinic workshop brings this learning back to Tirebolu through interactive sessions that apply those examples to local challenges. These activities are tailored to equip the staff and volunteers with the knowledge and confidence to take on a strategic role in tourism development.

For the constraint of low coordination among local institutions and actors, the project establishes the EcoConnect Hub. This will be a multi-stakeholder platform where public institutions, private businesses, and civil society organizations meet three-monthly. The hub will allow for continued dialogue, policy alignment, and joint initiatives. It will then build a culture of cooperation and contributes to a more cohesive tourism ecosystem.

In response to weak collaboration between business owners and lack of capacity in product development, the project runs the "Eco-Product Laboratory." The activity includes workshops and co-design activities with artisans, guesthouse operators, and other local producers. The agenda focuses on sustainable product development and storytelling, tailored to Tirebolu's heritage and nature. Complementary to this activity, the "Finance for Growth" training introduces micro-finance, grant options, and proposal writing to local businesses. The activity targets small enterprises, especially those led by women, and supports them in accessing funds and improving business planning.

For *outreach and visibility*, the project launches the “Start of the Journey” opening event. This is followed by a digital media campaign titled “See, Share, Sustain,” in which influencers produce content about Tirebolu’s cultural, natural, and gastronomic appeal. Young people are involved in shaping these stories to ensure relevance to wider audiences.

All activities culminate in the drafting of a *Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan* through the participatory “Local Lens Dialogues,” drafting workshops, and a public hearing titled “Plan in Progress.” The “Legacy in Motion” closing event showcases the results and provides space for partners to renew their commitments. The project brings local institutions, businesses, and residents together through a shared and structured journey, directly shaped around their existing challenges and future aspirations.

Key Stakeholders and Consultations

On 25 April 2024, Tirebolu Municipality, together with the Green Tirebolu Association and the Chamber of Commerce, held a *stakeholder consultation meeting* to present and discuss the proposed action. A stakeholder map had been developed in advance, identifying key actors from central government offices, local institutions, professional associations, NGOs, and sports clubs. Participants included the Directorate of Religious Affairs (for faith tourism), police (for safety), and public offices such as the Social Assistance Foundation, Youth and Sports Directorate, and Agriculture Directorate. Representatives from the university (Tirebolu Faculty of Communication), cooperatives, chambers, and local NGOs also joined. The overall *attitude towards the action* was highly positive. Stakeholders appreciated the focus on inclusive tourism and local development. As a *result of their feedback*, some project activities were slightly revised to better align with local needs.

Technical and Management Capacities

The *primary target groups* include municipal staff, local volunteers, and business owners. Around 150 municipal employees, of whom 30% are women and 25% hold university degrees, possess moderate administrative experience but limited exposure to tourism planning. Volunteers from the Green Tirebolu Association are highly motivated yet operate informally without structured tools. Among the 400 local businesses, only a small number are women-led, and most lack access to training, finance, and market linkages. Their capacity for tourism-related product development and cooperation is underdeveloped. Overall, technical skills are basic, and collaborative structures between groups remain weak or fragmented.

Tirebolu Municipality operates with limited institutional capacity in tourism governance. While its administrative staff is generally experienced in core municipal services, there is little specialization in tourism planning and sustainable development. Yet, the Municipality is experienced in participatory policy-making. Budgetary constraints and limited exposure to EU project financing reduce the municipality’s technical and strategic flexibility. Despite this, there is a growing political willingness to invest in tourism as a driver of local development. The municipality has structured mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and integrated planning and has the administrative authority and outreach potential to act as a coordinating body for inclusive local development efforts.

The *Green Tirebolu Association* is a small civil society organization composed mainly of volunteers with a shared interest in environmental protection and local heritage. The Association has informal networks within the town and a basic track record in awareness campaigns and clean-up activities. While it lacks formal institutional infrastructure and has small-budget project management capacity, the Association brings valuable grassroots insight and community credibility. The association has no permanent staff beyond one part-time coordinator and minimal technical resources. However, its voluntary presence and enthusiasm for sustainable tourism make it a potential partner in mobilizing residents and promoting eco-conscious local initiatives.

The *Chamber of Small Business Owners and Artisans* is a formally registered organization representing approximately 400 small businesses in Tirebolu, including shops, guesthouses, food producers, and service providers. It has legal authority to advocate for member interests and a stable presence in the town, but no technical experience with externally funded development projects. The Chamber's management is familiar with local business dynamics but not experienced in formal trainings, sustainable tourism, innovation support, or digital marketing. One permanent staff member is assigned to liaise with SME initiatives.

Intervention Logic

PM² is a project management methodology developed by the European Commission. The methodology integrates best practices from EU-funded initiatives and is specifically designed for use by EU institutions and projects. PM² handbook (v.3.1) provides tools, templates, and a clear governance framework to support effective planning, implementation, and closure; particularly for projects involving multiple stakeholders (see PM² Official Site). Accordingly, the Eco-Tirebolu Project will be carried out in line with the core principles and structure of the PM² methodology.

In the preparation of this Eco-Tirebolu proposal, the 5W1H method (commonly used in journalism to present complex events in a clear and structured manner) has been adapted as a tool for designing and describing project activities. This approach defines each through six core dimensions: What (scope of the activity), Why (its objective and intended contribution to project results), Where (the specific location of implementation), When (the planned timing within the implementation schedule), Who (the distribution of roles and responsibilities among partners), and How (the methodology and operational steps to be followed). By applying this model consistently to all activities, the proposal is aiming to presented activities in a logical and comprehensive narrative.

Following the activity descriptions, each activity will be accompanied by a table outlining its key assumptions, required inputs, expected deliverables, and a RASCI matrix. As recommended by the PM² methodology, the RASCI model serves as a practical tool to clearly define the roles of each partner involved in the activity. Specifically, the Table identifies who is Responsible, Accountable, Supporting, Consulted, and Informed.

In addition, engaging and thematic names are given to project activities to enhance visibility, and stakeholder engagement. These carefully selected titles reflect the purpose and spirit of each activity while making the project more relatable to diverse audiences.

The Eco-Tirebolu Tourism Revitalization Project aims to transform Tirebolu into a sustainable, attractive coastal destination that supports local economic development while preserving cultural and environmental assets. Guided by the PM² methodology, the project strengthens institutional and strategic capacities for tourism governance and planning, including staff training, international benchmarking, and the creation of a participatory urban tourism plan. The action also boosts the capabilities of local businesses through targeted trainings and collaboration platforms, while increasing public awareness and visibility via events and influencer-driven outreach campaigns.

Tirebolu Eco-Tourism Revitalization Project			
Impact: Tirebolu becomes a sustainable and attractive tourism destination contributing to local economic development and cultural preservation.			
Outcome 1: Institutional and Strategic Capacity of Tirebolu Improved for Sustainable Urban Tourism Development		Outcome 2: Market Opportunities and Stakeholder Engagement in Tirebolu is Enhanced	
Output 1.1. Capacity of key institutions strengthened and organizational structures aligned.	Output 1.2. Comprehensive urban tourism plan created through participatory, evidence-based process.	Output 2.1. Local businesses gain skills and networks to deliver high-value sustainable tourism products.	Output 2.2. Tirebolu's sustainable tourism brand gains visibility and attraction in target markets.
1.1.1 SUT Ambassadors	1.2.1. Local Lens Dialogues	2.1.1. Eco-Product Laboratory	2.2.1. Start of the Journey
1.1.2. EU Study Mission	1.2.2. Drafting the Vision	2.1.2. Finance for Growth	2.2.2. See, Share, Sustain
1.1.3. Case-Clinic Workshop	1.2.3. Plan in Progress	2.1.3. EcoConnect Hub	2.2.3. Legacy in Motion

Inception Period

The inception period of Eco-Tirebolu takes place in the first month and focuses on mobilising the team and finalising preparations. The Project Manager will work full-time to launch internal coordination, initiate partnerships, and finalise the work plan. The SUTP Expert will contribute to aligning technical content. Equipment procurement will be completed. A detailed review of the project timeline and activities will be conducted, allowing for minor readjustments based on updated field conditions and stakeholder feedback before full implementation begins.

Assumptions	Timely recruitment, procurement and partner alignment			
Inputs	PM (20 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (2 days x 300€) + Equipment (1951€)			
Deliverables	Communication plan, stakeholder matrix, risk management plan and revised activity time table, rules of procedure for steering committee			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Municipality & Association	Association	Chamber	Contracting Authority

Theory of Change to Output 1.1 (Capacity of key institutions strengthened and organizational structures aligned)

IF the activities of the Sustainable Urban Tourism (SUT) Ambassadors, the EU Study Mission, and the Case-Clinic Workshop are successfully implemented; **AND** the underlying assumptions of institutional commitment and active participation in the trainings, smooth and effective communication with Portuguese institutions, relevant case studies are prepared in advance and university experts are available, hold true; **THEN** the output of “Capacity of key institutions strengthened and organizational structures aligned” will be achieved.

Activity 1.1.1 – SUT Ambassadors Training Programme

The scope of the activity is a 2-day training programme on sustainable urban tourism with 12 participants. The objective of this activity is to enhance the institutional knowledge and operational capacity of local stakeholders by equipping them with the core principles and practical tools of sustainable urban tourism (SUT). The training aims to build a foundation for aligning Tirebolu's tourism governance with global standards, focusing on strategic planning, participatory engagement, and sustainability-oriented development. The timing of the activity is set to Month 2, allowing it to serve as an early capacity-building intervention that supports subsequent planning and implementation processes. The location of the activity will be a 3-star hotel in Tirebolu, providing a suitable and accessible venue for intensive learning sessions and group interaction. The training will use an interactive, competency-based methodology with expert-led sessions, EU case studies, simulations, and group work. Twelve participants (six from the municipality, five from the association, and one from the chamber) will be selected based on a 40% gender quota, relevant professional background, tourism-related duties, and motivation. Selection will ensure a balanced, multidisciplinary local representation. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Municipality will lead the organization and delivery of the training. The Association and the Chamber will be responsible for nominating participants and ensuring institutional representation.

Assumptions	Institutional commitment to participation; active participation from partners to role play and action plan development			
Inputs	PM (10 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (2 days x 300€) + Event (1960 €)			
Deliverables	Training agenda, participants list, training report, certificates			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Municipality	Association and Chamber	Giresun University	Contracting Authority

Activity 1.1.2 – EU Study Mission

The scope of the activity is a 5-day international study visit on sustainable urban tourism, focused on peer learning and benchmarking. A total of 5 participants will attend. The objective of this activity is to enhance the institutional capacity of Tirebolu's tourism stakeholders by exposing them to European best practices in sustainable urban tourism. Through direct observation and engagement, participants will gain insights into integrated tourism planning, coastal destination management, community involvement, and visibility strategies applicable to Tirebolu's local context. The timing of the activity is set to Month 3, allowing for sufficient preparatory coordination and alignment with project progress. The location of the activity will be Portugal, focusing on three cities: Sintra, Cascais, and Setubal. Each of these cities demonstrates successful models in heritage conservation, smart tourism infrastructure, and community-based tourism promotion. The methodology includes preparatory briefings, expert-led thematic sessions, site visits, and daily reflections, with emphasis on hands-on learning through dialogue with local stakeholders. Two participants each from the municipality and association, and one from the chamber, will be selected based on gender balance and relevant responsibilities. ANMP will support planning, and a benchmarking report will follow. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Municipality of Tirebolu will lead the activity and coordinate overall logistics. The Green Tirebolu Association and the Chamber will nominate participants. The project manager will handle all travel arrangements and documentation, while the SUTP expert will provide thematic guidance and facilitate learning throughout the visit.

Assumptions	Smooth communication with Portuguese authorities; Portuguese staff are available and willing to inform the delegation.			
Inputs	PM (20 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (7 days x 300€) + Event (12124 €)			
Deliverables	Visit programme, participant list, benchmarking report			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Municipality	Association and Chamber	ANMP	Contracting Authority

Activity 1.1.3 – Case-Clinic Workshop

The scope of the activity is a 1-day interactive case-clinic workshop on sustainable urban tourism. A total of 25 participants will be involved. The objective of this activity is to facilitate structured knowledge exchange and peer learning among local actors through a case-based workshop on sustainable urban tourism. By jointly analysing relevant international and national case studies, participants will strengthen their understanding of key thematic dimensions and identify adaptable practices for Tirebolu's tourism development. The timing of the activity is set to Month 4, strategically placed after the initial training and before the drafting of the urban tourism plan. The location of the activity will be a 3-star hotel venue in Tirebolu, easily accessible for institutional stakeholders and external guests. The methodology of the activity is grounded in participatory and thematic group work. Prior to the workshop, each participant will be assigned to one of five thematic groups—environmental sustainability, cultural heritage conservation, inclusive governance, local economic development, and smart infrastructure. Participants will be asked to research and submit relevant case studies within their theme. During the workshop, each group will engage in facilitated analysis of selected cases using a structured template, followed by cross-group sharing to compare insights. The session will close with a moderated discussion to extract actionable recommendations for Tirebolu. Visual tools, SWOT analysis, and peer feedback loops will be integrated into the group sessions. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Association will coordinate logistics, while the Municipality will invite participants from Giresun University and the Chamber will manage other relevant participant outreach. Giresun University will be consulted for expert view and for the methodology.

Assumptions	Participants prepare relevant case studies in advance; university experts are available to moderate group work.			
Inputs	PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (4 days x 300€) + Event (1750 €)			
Deliverables	Agenda, participants list, workshop report, compiled case study portfolio			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Association	Municipality and Chamber	Giresun University	Contracting Authority

Table of Output 1.1.

Output 1.1: Capacity of key institutions strengthened and organizational structures aligned	
<u>Indicator 1</u> to output 1	Number of participants certified
Indicator 1 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	12 certified participants by 2027
Sources of data for the values of the indicator	Training attendance logs and certification records
<u>Indicator 2</u> to output 1	Benchmarking report produced
Indicator 2 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	1 by 2027
Source of data for the values of the indicator	Finalised benchmarking report document
<u>Indicator 3</u> to output 1	Compiled Case Study Portfolio
Indicator 3 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	1 by 2027
Source of data for the values of the indicator	The case study portfolio file

Theory of Change to Output 1.2 (Comprehensive urban tourism plan created through participatory, evidence-based process)

IF the activities of the Local Lens Dialogues, Drafting the Vision, and Plan in Progress are successfully implemented; **AND** the underlying assumptions that invited stakeholders attend and actively contribute to the Local Lens Dialogues, that drafting sessions are effectively scheduled and stakeholder priorities remain consistent during the drafting phase, and that local and regional stakeholders engage meaningfully in the public hearing process, hold true; **THEN** the output of “Comprehensive urban tourism plan created through participatory, evidence-based process” will be achieved.

Activity 1.2.1 – Local Lens Dialogues

The scope of the activity is a half-day stakeholder dialogue meeting aimed at gathering diverse local perspectives to inform Tirebolu’s Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan. A total of 30 participants will be invited, reflecting the diversity of Tirebolu’s institutional and community landscape. The objective of this activity is to identify the expectations, priorities, and concerns of local actors (ranging from community representatives and business owners to civil society and public institutions) regarding the future direction of tourism development in Tirebolu. The timing of the activity is set to Month 5, following the EU Study Mission and aligned with the early stages of tourism plan drafting. The location of the activity will be a 3-star hotel venue in Tirebolu. The methodology of the activity will be based on participatory consultation techniques. The process will begin with a short framing presentation on sustainable tourism principles and the goals of the Urban Tourism Plan. This will be followed by small group discussions facilitated through focus group techniques, where participants will identify key needs, opportunities, and challenges. Results will be collected using flipcharts and structured templates, and synthesized in a closing plenary session to ensure mutual understanding. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Association will lead the coordination and facilitation of the activity, while the Municipality will provide logistical support and assist with stakeholder outreach.

Assumptions	Invited stakeholders attend the session; participants openly express their views			
Inputs	PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (4 days x 300€) + Event (1200 €)			
Deliverables	Agenda, participants list, stakeholder consultation matrix			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Association	Municipality and Chamber	Giresun University	Contracting Authority

Activity 1.2.2 – Drafting the Vision

The scope of the activity is the preparation of a draft policy document that outlines the strategic vision and action framework for Tirebolu's Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan. The objective of this activity is to consolidate the knowledge and feedback gathered throughout previous activities and translate them into a structured, forward-looking draft plan that will serve as the foundation for stakeholder validation and political endorsement. The timing of the activity is set to Month 6, following the training, consultations, study visit, and case analysis. The location of the activity will be within the Municipality's project coordination unit, where the project team and technical experts can collaborate closely and access relevant data. The methodology of the activity will follow a structured drafting process led by the Project Manager and the Sustainable Urban Tourism Planning (SUTP) expert. Using inputs from the Local Lens Dialogues, the Case-Clinic Workshop, and the EU Study Mission, the team will synthesize key themes and formulate a clear vision statement. This will be followed by the definition of strategic objectives, zoning guidelines, and thematic priorities. A draft action matrix will be created, detailing proposed measures, responsible actors, and indicative budgets. The draft will also include a timeline for implementation and investment planning, aligned with EU and national funding opportunities. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Municipality will lead the drafting process and ensure institutional alignment, while the Association will support with background inputs, stakeholder insights, and editorial contributions.

Assumptions	Drafting sessions are uninterrupted and effectively scheduled; stakeholder priorities remain consistent			
Inputs	PM (40 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (5 days x 300€)			
Deliverables	Draft Sustainable Urban Tourism Policy Paper			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Municipality	Association	Stakeholders	Contracting Authority

Activity 1.2.3 – Plan in Progress

The scope of the activity is a half-day public hearing and announcement event, titled Plan in Progress, which aims to present the draft Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan to a broad audience of local stakeholders. The objective of this activity is to validate and finalize the draft plan by gathering structured feedback from the public, civil society, businesses, and institutional actors, and to build broad consensus prior to its formal adoption by the municipal council. The timing of the activity is set to Month 10, allowing sufficient time for stakeholder review and revision following the circulation of the draft. The location of the activity will be a large public venue in Tirebolu, adequate to

approximately 100 participants representing diverse sectors and community groups. The methodology of the activity is structured in three phases. First, the draft plan will be distributed to all relevant stakeholders in Month 8, with a feedback collection process involving written comments, digital surveys, and focused group meetings. Based on this feedback, the project team will revise the plan and prepare the final version. The public hearing in Month 10 will serve both as a public communication event and a validation platform. The event will include a presentation of the final plan, testimonials from stakeholders, and a moderated discussion to address any remaining concerns. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Municipality will lead the organization of the event and manage while the Association will support the outreach and facilitation during the event.

Assumptions	Local and regional media shows interest to event; weather conditions allow outside event			
Inputs	PM (10 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (3 days x 300€) + Visibility Expert (3 days x 300 €) + Event (10000 €)			
Deliverables	Agenda, event Report, media outreach report			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / Visibility Expert	Municipality	Association	Stakeholders	Contracting Authority

Table of Output 1.2.

Output 1.2: Comprehensive urban tourism plan created through participatory, evidence-based process	
<u>Indicator 1</u> to output 1.1	Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan
Indicator 1 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	Plan by 2027
Sources of data for the values of the indicator	Municipal Council decision
<u>Indicator 2</u> to output 1.1	Number of stakeholder institutions involved in the process
Indicator 2 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	20 by 2027
Source of data for the values of the indicator	Participants lists, attendee sheets, Members of Eco-Hub

Theory of Change to Output 2.1. (Local businesses gain skills and networks to deliver high-value sustainable tourism products)

IF the activities of the Eco-Product Laboratory, Finance for Growth, and EcoConnect Hub are successfully implemented; **AND** the underlying assumptions that participants attend, engage actively, and share ideas during product development training; that they are motivated and believe funding is attainable during the financial literacy session; and that a diverse range of stakeholders is represented and engaged in the EcoConnect Hub, hold true; **THEN** the output of “Local businesses gain skills and networks to deliver high-value sustainable tourism products” will be achieved.

Activity 2.1.1 – Eco-Product Laboratory

The scope of the activity is a one-day hands-on training workshop designed to build the capacities of local SMEs and tourism actors in developing and marketing value-added, sustainable tourism products. A total of 50 participants will be engaged. The objective of this activity is to equip participants with practical knowledge and tools to create, brand, and price eco-friendly products that reflect Tirebolu's local identity and culture. The timing of the activity is set to Month 7, placed before the promotion and outreach phase of the Plan. The location of the activity will be a 3-star hotel in Tirebolu, providing a professional environment for interactive learning. The methodology draws on best practices from EU-funded trainings on sustainable tourism entrepreneurship. A 40% gender quota and priority for women-owned businesses will ensure inclusive participation. SMEs will be selected through a transparent call and short application process assessing relevance and readiness. The training begins with market trends and sustainability principles, followed by branding, eco-labeling, pricing, packaging, and storytelling. Regional case studies and group work support co-development of product concepts. A worksheet guides strategy design, and the session ends with idea sharing. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Municipality will lead the coordination and logistics of the event, the Association will support content development and facilitation, and the Chamber will be responsible for outreach and ensuring strong and relevant SME participation.

Assumptions	Participants attend, engage actively and share ideas.			
Inputs	PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (4 days x 300€) + Event (3500 €)			
Deliverables	Agenda, participant list, eco-product concepts portfolio (drafted by participants)			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Municipality	Association / Chamber	Stakeholders	Contracting Authority

Activity 2.1.2 – Finance for Growth

The scope of the activity is a half-day capacity-building training focused on improving the financial literacy and project development skills of local entrepreneurs, SMEs, and tourism actors in Tirebolu. A total of 50 participants are expected to attend. The objective of this activity is to introduce participants to accessible funding mechanisms (such as grants, micro-loans, and EU programmes) and to guide them in developing competitive funding proposals aligned with their tourism product ideas and business plans. The timing of the activity is set to Month 8, after product development training has been completed, allowing for synergy between product design and access to finance. The location of the activity will be a 3-star hotel in Tirebolu, offering a convenient and professional venue for structured training sessions. The methodology of the activity will combine short expert-led presentations with applied, step-by-step exercises. The training will start with an overview of current funding opportunities for tourism-related entrepreneurship, including national programmes and EU-level instruments such as Erasmus+, COSME, and as well as national and regional development funds. Participants of the product development training will be prioritised for attendance. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Association will organize and lead the training content and delivery. The Chamber will ensure participant outreach and mobilization, while the Municipality will serve in a consultative role to ensure alignment with local tourism priorities.

Assumptions	Participants are motivated and believe funding is attainable.			
Inputs	PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (3 days x 300€) + Event (2000 €)			
Deliverables	Agenda, participant list, list of funding programmes for SMEs			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Association	Chamber	Municipality	Contracting Authority

Activity 2.1.3 – EcoConnect Hub

The scope of the activity is a half-day working breakfast meeting designed to launch the EcoConnect Hub, a recurring stakeholder forum that brings together public institutions, private sector actors, and civil society organizations. A total of 15 participants will be engaged in this initial session. The objective of this activity is to establish a collaborative platform for monitoring and supporting the implementation of the Tirebolu Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan through regular dialogue, coordination, and joint problem-solving. The timing of the activity is set to Month 11, after the plan's adoption, serving as the kick-off for a series of three-monthly coordination meetings. The location of the activity will be a 3-star hotel in Tirebolu, offering a quiet and comfortable environment suitable for informal but structured dialogue. The methodology of the activity is based on the roundtable and action-lab model. Following a short opening presentation on the plan's implementation roadmap, each participant will provide updates, share needs or barriers, and propose joint actions. Facilitated discussion will focus on identifying synergies, aligning timelines, and creating a shared calendar of responsibilities. A structured template will guide dialogue and ensure output-oriented results. An action point tracker will be established to monitor progress across the upcoming meetings. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Municipality will organize and facilitate the session. The Chamber will support coordination with businesses, and the Association will contribute stakeholder insights and thematic guidance.

Assumptions	A diverse range of stakeholders is represented in the EcoConnect Hub.			
Inputs	PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (3 days x 300€) + Event (600 €)			
Deliverables	Working procedures for EcoConnect Hub, list of member institutions			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / SUTP Expert	Municipality	Chamber	Association	Contracting Authority

Table of Output 2.1.

Output 2.1: Local businesses gain skills and networks to deliver high-value sustainable tourism products	
Indicator 1 to output 1.1	Number businesses trained
Indicator 1 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	70 by 2027
Sources of data for the values of the indicator	List of participants, attendee sheets
Indicator 2 to output 1.1	Number of coordination mechanisms established
Indicator 2 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	EcoConnect Hub by 2027
Source of data for the values of the indicator	List of member institutions, Municipal decision issued for the establishment of the EcoConnect Hub

Theory of Change to Output 2.2 (Tirebolu’s sustainable tourism brand gains visibility and attraction in target markets)

IF the activities of Start of the Journey, See, Share, Sustain, and Legacy in Motion are successfully implemented; **AND** the underlying assumptions that media shows interest and provides coverage during the opening event; that influencer posts receive strong engagement through shares, comments, and likes; and that key stakeholders attend and contribute to the closing conference, hold true; **THEN** the output of “Tirebolu’s sustainable tourism brand gains visibility and attraction in target markets” will be achieved.

Activity 2.2.1 – Start of the Journey

The scope of the activity is a high-visibility, half-day opening event bringing together 100 participants to officially launch the Eco-Tirebolu Project and raise awareness about its goals, partners, and long-term benefits. The objective of this activity is to generate public and institutional interest, ensure early stakeholder involvement, and establish a strong communication baseline for the project’s future visibility and outreach efforts. The timing of the activity is set to Month 2, allowing it to create early momentum and set the tone for the rest of the implementation period. The location of the activity will be a 3-star hotel in Tirebolu, centrally located and suitable for both formal presentations and informal networking. The venue will be arranged to accommodate multimedia presentations and a press corner. The methodology of the activity will combine formal and interactive communication tools. The event will begin with opening speeches by key institutional representatives, followed by a project presentation introducing the objectives, methodology, timeline, and expected impact. A short video or visual storytelling segment will showcase Tirebolu’s tourism potential. To make the event engaging, a panel or moderated dialogue with local actors and influencers will be included. Local and regional media will be invited, with a press briefing organized alongside the main programme to ensure coverage. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Municipality will lead the planning and hosting of the event. The Green Tirebolu Association will support content development and visual materials, while the Chamber will assist with local outreach and coordination with business stakeholders.

Assumptions	Media shows interest in project			
Inputs	PM (15 days x 90€) + Visibility Expert (4 days x 300 €) + Event (4000 €)			
Deliverables	Agenda, participant list, media kit			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / Visibility Expert	Municipality	Association	Chamber	Contracting Authority

Activity 2.2.2 – See, Share, Sustain

The scope of the activity is the development and dissemination of three high-impact social media videos by nationally recognized influencers to promote Tirebolu’s sustainable tourism offerings, including its cultural heritage, natural landscape, local gastronomy, and responsible travel options. The objective of this activity is to raise awareness, attract visitors, and increase the visibility of Tirebolu as a unique and eco-conscious tourism destination, particularly among younger and digital-native audiences. The timing of the activity is set between Month 4 and Month 10, allowing content to be released periodically in line with evolving trends and project milestones. The location of the activity will be on-site in Tirebolu, where influencers will shoot video content across selected attractions,

routes, and local businesses. Filming will showcase authentic experiences and reflect the core values of the Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan. The methodology of the activity will be rooted in trend-responsive digital storytelling. An informal meeting with local youth will be organized at the municipal building to gather their ideas and feedback on content and interior design. Each influencer will co-develop content with the project team, shaped by what is popular or shareable during that specific month (e.g., seasonal foods, festivals, or environmental themes). Content will be designed to balance entertainment, education, and emotional appeal. Visual consistency and hashtag strategy will ensure brand alignment. Influencers will also engage their audiences through comments, polls, and story-based interaction to generate organic reach. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Association will coordinate influencer selection, content planning, and delivery. The Municipality will facilitate access to locations and permissions.

Assumptions	Posts receive strong engagement through shares, comments, and likes.			
Inputs	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + Visibility Expert (10 days x 300 €) + Influencer Deal (6000€) + Car Hire (600€)</i>			
Deliverables	3 video contents, 3 influencer contracts			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / Visibility Expert	Association	Municipality	Youth	Contracting Authority

Activity 2.2.3 – Legacy in Motion

The scope of the activity is a half-day closing conference entitled Legacy in Motion, designed to present the overall achievements of the Eco-Tirebolu Project, share success stories, and reinforce commitments to long-term sustainable tourism partnerships. The objective of this activity is to reflect on lessons learned, celebrate stakeholder contributions, and ensure institutional momentum for the continued implementation of the Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan. The timing of the activity is set to Month 12, marking the final month of the project. The location of the activity will be a 3-star hotel in Tirebolu, suitable for hosting a formal yet inclusive event for approximately 100 participants, including project partners, stakeholders, local and regional institutions, and the media. The methodology of the activity will combine structured presentations with participatory dialogue. The event will begin with opening speeches from project partners and public officials, followed by a panel discussion featuring key actors from public, private, and civil society sectors. The panel will focus on practical achievements, implementation challenges, and forward-looking strategies. A short video showcasing project highlights will also be presented. The event will conclude with a Q&A session and the signing or announcement of future cooperation pledges. Concerning the roles and responsibilities, the Municipality will lead the coordination and event hosting. The Association will support content development, media materials, and facilitation. The Chamber will assist in business outreach and panel participation.

Assumptions	Key stakeholders attend the event.			
Inputs	PM (15 days x 90€) + Visibility Expert (3 days x 300 €) + Event (4000 €)			
Deliverables	Agenda, participant list, media kit			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / Visibility Expert	Municipality	Association	Chamber	Contracting Authority

Table of Output 2.2.

Output 2.1: Tirebolu's sustainable tourism brand gains visibility and attraction in target markets	
Indicator 1 to output 1.1	Number of people reached through influencer-led content
Indicator 1 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	75000+ by 2027
Sources of data for the values of the indicator	Social media analytics (views, reach, impressions)
Indicator 2 to output 1.1	Number of media articles or news features
Indicator 2 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	7+ by 2027
Source of data for the values of the indicator	Press clippings, media monitoring reports

Closing Phase

In the final two months of Eco-Tirebolu, project activities focus on completing deliverables and administrative closure. Key tasks include submitting the final narrative and financial reports, verifying the final bank balance, finalizing the Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan, publishing results online, and closing communication tools. All outputs are compiled and delivered as scheduled reports.

Assumptions	All outputs are achieved			
Inputs	PM (20 days x 90€)			
Deliverables	Final report, bank clearance			
R	A	S	C	I
PM / PST / PC	Municipality	Association and Chamber	Stakeholders	Contracting Authority

Theory of Change for Outcome 1

IF the outputs of key institutions staff being trained and governance structures being aligned for sustainable tourism (Output 1.1), and the development of a participatory and evidence-based urban tourism plan (Output 1.2), are successfully delivered; **AND** the assumptions described (namely, strong institutional commitment and active partner participation, smooth coordination and information exchange with external stakeholders such as Portuguese authorities, the availability and engagement of experts and participants in preparatory and interactive tasks, consistent stakeholder involvement in dialogue and planning processes, and favourable logistical and external conditions such as media interest and suitable weather for public events) hold true, **THEN** the outcome of “Institutional and

Strategic Capacity of Tirebolu Improved for Sustainable Urban Tourism Development” will be realized. **BECAUSE** there will be a certified team of trained municipal staff already in place, and the Tirebolu Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan will have been developed and adopted through participatory processes. Furthermore, well-designed governance mechanisms are a proven determinant of successful sustainable tourism policy implementation. This is evident from research by Martins, R. (2021) in the Journal of Urban Tourism Governance, titled “Tourism Governance and Institutional Anchoring in Small Coastal Cities” which highlights how structured training and participatory strategic planning increased implementation capacity in three Baltic municipalities. Additionally, the “GreenDest2020” project, funded under the EU’s URBACT programme, demonstrated that combining staff training, stakeholder engagement, and external peer exchange led to a significant increase in institutional coordination capacity across participating towns.

Outcome 1: Institutional and Strategic Capacity of Tirebolu Improved for Sustainable Urban Tourism Development	
<u>Indicator 1</u> to outcome 1	Number of municipal staff assigned to tourism roles
<u>Indicator 1 target</u> with <u>year</u>	2 by 2030
Sources of data for the values of the indicator	Municipal organizational chart
<u>Indicator 2</u> to outcome 1	Number of public/NGO institutions citing Tirebolu SUTP in official documents
<u>Indicator 2 target</u> with <u>year</u>	5 by 2030
Source of data for the values of the indicator	Copies of official texts

Theory of Change for Outcome 2

IF the outputs of local businesses gaining skills and networks to deliver high-value sustainable tourism products (Output 2.1), and Tirebolu’s sustainable tourism brand gaining visibility and attraction in target markets (Output 2.2), are successfully delivered; **AND** the assumptions described (namely, strong participation and motivation among SMEs, interest and trust in available funding opportunities, diverse stakeholder representation in coordination platforms, consistent collaboration between public, private, and civil society actors, high engagement on digital platforms, and sustained media interest in the project) hold true, **THEN** the outcome of “Market Opportunities and Stakeholder Engagement in Tirebolu is Enhanced” will be achieved. **BECAUSE** local entrepreneurs and tourism actors will have received targeted training on eco-product development and financing options, new collaborative networks such as the EcoConnect Hub will be operational, and Tirebolu’s visibility will have increased through digital campaigns and public events. Enhanced skills, improved coordination, and active branding are critical enablers of inclusive local economic development, as demonstrated in the study by Schneider, L. (2020), titled “Small Town Tourism Revitalization through Community Branding and Multi-Actor Partnerships” published in Local Economy Review. This study shows that stakeholder-driven branding and public-private coordination mechanisms improved tourism flows and business resilience in rural Portuguese towns. Furthermore, the EU-funded “RuralRevive” initiative under the COSME programme demonstrated that integrating influencer marketing, SME training, and public engagement helped under-visited towns improve tourism revenue and create long-term stakeholder alliances.

Outcome 2: Market Opportunities and Stakeholder Engagement in Tirebolu is Enhanced	
Indicator 1 to outcome 1	Number of new or significantly improved tourism products
Indicator 1 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	10 by 2030
Sources of data for the values of the indicator	Photo documentation
Indicator 2 to outcome 1	Number of influencers visiting Tirebolu for engagement
Indicator 2 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	10 by 2030
Source of data for the values of the indicator	#tirebolu hastags, social media posts

Theory of Change for Impact

IF the outcomes of Institutional and Strategic Capacity of Tirebolu Improved for Sustainable Urban Tourism Development and Market Opportunities and Stakeholder Engagement in Tirebolu is Enhanced are achieved; **AND** the assumptions described in the Logframe at the outcome level hold true (namely, that local commitment to tourism remains strong, the Tirebolu SUTP continues to gain recognition, social media interest in Tirebolu persists, and SMEs remain engaged in product innovation); **THEN** the action will contribute to the desired impact: Tirebolu becomes a sustainable and attractive tourism destination contributing to local economic development and cultural preservation. **BECAUSE** past experience and evidence suggest that institutional capacity-building combined with inclusive planning, active stakeholder engagement, and targeted place branding contribute directly to improved tourism outcomes. For example, Schneider (2020) demonstrated the positive correlation between local product innovation and regional tourism growth, while Martins (2021) highlighted how participatory planning and capacity development increased implementation success in small coastal cities. Furthermore, EU-funded projects like RuralRevive and GreenDest2020 proved that integrated approaches blending governance reform, stakeholder coordination, and promotional strategies can transform lesser-known towns into sustainable tourism destinations.

Impact: Tirebolu becomes a sustainable and attractive tourism destination contributing to local economic development and cultural preservation	
Indicator 1 to Impact	% of decrease in unemployment rate
Indicator 1 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	% 10 by 2032
Sources of data for the values of the indicator	Employment agency stats
Indicator 2 to Impact	Number of new of increase in hotels
Indicator 2 <u>target</u> with <u>year</u>	2 more by 2032
Source of data for the values of the indicator	Licence applications, operation permits

Eventual Changes

There are no changes to the information provided in the concept note. All details regarding objectives, activities, partners, and budget remain as originally submitted and approved in the concept note phase.

Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan & Tirebolu

A Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan (SUTP) is a strategic roadmap for guiding tourism development in cities and towns in a way that ensures balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social inclusion. Rather than promoting tourism as an isolated sector, SUTPs integrate it into broader urban policies and planning frameworks, helping local authorities align tourism with the needs of residents and long-term sustainability goals. By developing an SUTP, municipalities can ensure that tourism enhances rather than disrupts quality of life, protects cultural and natural resources, supports local businesses, and increases resilience.

The preparation of an SUTP generally begins with a baseline assessment, examining tourism trends, infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, and social dynamics. This phase is followed by a participatory process involving civil society, local businesses, and residents to identify needs and expectations. Key components of the plan include a long-term vision and objectives, defined roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, zoning and mobility planning, SME support, sustainability strategies, and an action matrix with budget estimates. The plan also outlines a governance structure for implementation and a monitoring system with measurable indicators. Once finalised, the SUTP is adopted by municipal decision and made public to ensure ownership and accountability.

Several European cities illustrate the value of SUTPs. Pontevedra in Spain reduced mass tourism pressure on its historic core by controlling visitor flows and saw a 20% increase in tourism revenue. Helsinki integrated climate policy with participatory budgeting and achieved sustainability certification in 88% of accommodations. Killarney in Ireland eliminated single-use cups in 55 businesses and increased weekend visits by 15% through its local sustainable tourism plan. In Malmö's Bo01 district, tourism was embedded in eco-urban redevelopment, resulting in a 40% increase in visitors. The URBACT network shows that SUTPs can also promote cross-city collaboration, shared tools, and consistent impact monitoring. These examples demonstrate how a well-crafted SUTP drives economic vitality and destination resilience.

In Tirebolu, the SUTP will be the central long-term output of the Eco-Tirebolu project. SUTP will be shaped by several key activities: stakeholder meetings to gather priorities and concerns; fieldwork and observation during the Portugal study visit; training activities on tourism product development and sustainability; and outputs such as benchmarking reports, concept proposals, and action templates. These will feed into the SUTP by offering practical insights, tested approaches, and capacity built among local actors. The finalized plan will be submitted to the municipal council and published online, anchoring sustainable tourism in Tirebolu's development agenda.

2.1.2. Implementation approach (max 5 pages)

Implementation Methods and Inputs

The implementation of the Eco-Tirebolu Project requires a set of essential inputs including expert personnel, training materials, audio-visual equipment for visibility actions, and supplies for workshops and public events. All materials will be acquired or rented locally to support the regional economy and reduce logistical costs. The selected methodology prioritizes interactive stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and broad visibility, all of which require professional expertise and event-related materials.

The Project Manager (PM) is responsible for the overall coordination, planning, implementation, monitoring, and closure of the project. Acting as the central link between stakeholders, the PM ensures that all activities follow the PM² methodology, remain on schedule, and comply with EU grant regulations. His/her presence across all phases is essential to manage day-to-day operations, budgets, reporting, and communication among partners. The 240-day input reflects the PM's central role in sustaining timely delivery in quality.

The Sustainable Urban Tourism (SUT) Expert provides thematic guidance and technical content across all activities related to tourism governance, strategic planning, and SME capacity building. This expert will ensure that all outputs align with sustainable tourism frameworks and incorporate international best practices. The SUT Expert designs and delivers training, facilitates the study mission, leads the drafting of the tourism plan, and supports product development workshops. The 40-day input will complement consistent expert presence throughout the key planning and training stages.

The Visibility Expert evaluate and support the project's communication strategy, including visual branding, social media outreach, event media kits, and compliance with EU visibility guidelines. VE expert is responsible that the project's achievements are effectively communicated to local, national, and online audiences. The Visibility Expert also supports influencer engagement and manages final reporting on visibility indicators. The 20-day input reflects VE role during key events and content creation periods, especially for launching, promoting, and closing project milestones.

To support the effective delivery of the Eco-Tirebolu Project, a modest allocation of €2,705.71 is dedicated to equipment and supplies that directly enhance the implementation, coordination, and visibility of project activities. These inputs were selected based on practical necessity, cost-efficiency, and alignment with activity requirements.

Firstly, €600 is allocated for the short-term rental of a minivan during Activity 2.2.2 (See, Share, Sustain), enabling flexible transportation of influencers and video teams to multiple filming locations across Tirebolu, including heritage sites, natural attractions, and local businesses; ensuring full coverage during video content creation and avoids the inefficiency of multiple vehicle bookings.

Secondly, €750 is foreseen for the purchase of a mid-range laptop and a basic projector screen, which will support both project coordination and key public presentations. The laptop will assist the project team in drafting outputs and maintaining records, while the projector screen will be used during Activity 1.2.2 (Drafting the Vision) and 2.2.3 (Legacy in Motion) to display visual materials to stakeholders and also in the trainings. These are long-term assets that will remain with the Municipality after the project.

A total of €500 is allocated to machines and tools, including a color printer/scanner combo and a flipchart stand. These tools are critical for producing printed materials (agendas, maps, certificates) and supporting visual facilitation in workshops such as the Local Lens Dialogues (1.2.1) and Eco-Product Lab (2.1.1). In-house capacity will reduce reliance on costly external services.

Another €500 is reserved for *spare parts and consumables*, including toner cartridges, projector bulbs, cables, and paper to ensure the uninterrupted functionality of essential tools during high-traffic training periods.

Lastly, €201 is set aside for *digital platform licenses*, necessary for template website, content creation, video editing, and layout design to meet EU visibility standards and enhance communication impact.

For the trainings and workshops *3-star hotel* in Tirebolu will be used as a venue. Choosing an off-site venue, such as a hotel, for training sessions enhances motivation and engagement among participants. Studies show that off-site settings remove workplace distractions and foster focus and creativity, allowing attendees to immerse themselves fully in learning. Participants perceive off-site training as more valuable due to the investment in a professional setting, which also promotes satisfaction and staff retention. This environment benefits municipal experts, association and chamber representatives and SME owners by validating their importance, reinforcing learning through dedicated, structured support.

The Eco-Tirebolu Project will be managed using the *PM² methodology*, the official project management approach of the European Commission. PM² provides a structured framework for planning, executing, and monitoring projects in line with EU standards. Action will adopt its governance model, including clearly defined roles through the RASCI matrix (Responsible, Accountable, Support, Consulted, Informed), and follow its business layers and organizational structure. PM² will ensure accountability and effective coordination throughout the project lifecycle.

Building on Previous Actions

The action is not designed to prolong the effects of any previous initiative. As previously noted, no such projects have been funded in Tirebolu before. This is an independent action that emerged from consultation meetings held between Tirebolu Municipality and key local stakeholders.

Integration into Wider Programme

The Eco-Tirebolu Project will part of the broader Green Cities Grant Programme managed by the National Urbanization Agency and funded by the European Union. The action also complements the Green Cities Technical Assistance Project by translating its strategic guidance into local action. The project aligns with programme goals by building municipal capacity for sustainable urban tourism planning and fostering participatory governance. Therefore, Eco-Tirebolu creates synergies with other Grant Programme through shared priorities such as stakeholder engagement, local economic development, and environmental sustainability, contributing to the programme's collective impact on sustainable urban transformation in Türkiye.

Organisational Structure and Team

The Eco-Tirebolu Project adopts the PM² methodology to ensure structured and effective project governance. The organisational structure is designed around the five key PM² layers, each responsible for distinct aspects of project oversight and execution, tailored to the needs of a municipality-led initiative supported by civil society and other stakeholders.

Business Governing Layer: This layer defines the strategic vision of the Eco-Tirebolu Project and ensures alignment with the long-term objectives of sustainable urban development in Tirebolu. The layer is represented by the senior leadership of the Tirebolu Municipality, specifically the Mayor and the General Secretary, in coordination with the President of the Green Tirebolu Association. Together,

they provide strategic oversight and confirm that the project remains consistent with the institutional goals of both the public and civil society partners.

Steering Layer: This layer is composed of a Steering Committee, established to guide and monitor the project throughout its lifecycle. The committee includes senior representatives from the Municipality, Association and the Chamber as well as relevant stakeholders. The Steering Committee convenes quarterly to assess progress, review key deliverables, and address major strategic issues. SC provides overall direction and ensures that the project adheres to its approved scope and schedule.

Directing Layer: The directing layer is composed of the Project Sponsors, including the EU Delegation in Türkiye, the Contracting Authority responsible for managing the Green Cities Grant Programme and National Urbanization Agency as the main beneficiary. These three institutions provide financial and procedural oversight and ensure that the business case remains valid. They also act as the primary point of reference for contract-related matters, confirming resource availability and institutional backing.

Managing Layer: Daily management of the Eco-Tirebolu Project is the responsibility of the Project Manager, appointed by the Municipality. The Project Manager coordinates with a Co-Manager from the Green Tirebolu Association. Together, they manage planning, reporting, stakeholder communication, and coordination of all activities. They are supported by an administrative assistant and a financial officer, appointed by the municipality.

Performing Layer: This layer comprises the technical staff and field-level implementers, including SUTP expert, Visibility expert, trainers, facilitators, and workshop moderators. Layer also includes municipal officers assigned to support capacity building and outreach events. These team members are responsible for delivering outputs across the project's components, such as trainings, business workshops, community dialogues, and digital campaigns.

This 5-layered structure of Eco-Tirebolu Project will demonstrate transparency, accountability, and effectiveness throughout the implementation.

The *Steering Committee* of the Eco-Tirebolu Project will act as the central decision-making and oversight body, aiming that the project remains aligned with its strategic objectives. SC will be composed of representatives from the Tirebolu Municipality, Green Tirebolu Association, Chamber of Small Business Owners and Artisans of Tirebolu, and other key institutions including the Sub-Governorate, Social Assistance Foundation, Youth and Sports Directorate, Police Department, Agriculture Directorate, Tirebolu Faculty of Communication, and the Directorate of Nature Protection and National Parks. The composition allows for broad representation from municipal bodies, civil society, business community, and relevant public institutions, reflecting the full spectrum of stakeholders involved in the project.

Committee members will be selected based on their institutional roles and relevant expertise, particularly in areas such as sustainable tourism, local development, environmental protection, and stakeholder engagement. Their experience will support focused discussions and sound decision-making. A Rules and Procedures document will be prepared during the project's inception phase to define committee responsibilities, decision-making mechanisms (e.g., simple majority), and meeting conduct. Meetings will be held every three months at the Municipality building. Refreshments will be provided by the Municipality, and thus not charged to the project budget. All decisions and minutes will be documented and shared to ensure transparency and stakeholder trust.

In line with the PM² methodology, the Eco-Tirebolu Project will be managed through a structured team setup comprising a Project Core Team (PCT) and a Project Support Team (PST). The system will provide clear task allocation and efficient coordination.

The Project Core Team (PCT) of the Eco-Tirebolu Project will consist of four key members, each assigned specific roles. The Project Manager (PM), representing the Municipality, will lead the overall coordination, oversee implementation, ensure timely delivery of outputs, and maintain communication with the Steering Committee. The Project Assistant, assigned by the Green Tirebolu Association, will handle administrative tasks, follow up on documentation, and support day-to-day coordination. A Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan (SUTP) Expert will guide planning activities, ensure alignment with national strategies, and contribute to technical quality. The Visibility Expert will design communication materials, organise outreach campaigns, and ensure compliance with EU visibility rules. The PCT will meet regularly to monitor progress, resolve challenges, and update the PM on implementation status. Each member brings relevant expertise and assumes responsibility for specific work packages within the Project Work Plan, contributing to the successful implementation of activities and delivery of planned results.

The Project Support Team (PST) will include relevant experts from various municipal departments and two municipality staff members volunteering their time. They will provide operational, technical, and thematic support across activities and contribute to coordination meetings, supporting implementation and institutional continuity beyond the project duration.

Stakeholders and Assigned Roles

In the Eco-Tirebolu Project, the Steering Committee serves as a central governance body that provides strategic direction and ensures effective coordination among stakeholders. Tirebolu Municipality acts as the Secretariat of the Committee, responsible for organizing meetings, compiling agendas, preparing minutes, and ensuring that all decisions are implemented in the project's management framework. The municipality also plays a leading role in ensuring alignment with the Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan and coordinating efforts across departments. The Green Tirebolu Association is tasked with outreach and communication responsibilities, ensuring the participation of civil society and community-based stakeholders within the Committee. They serve as a bridge between grassroots actors and formal decision-making processes. The Chamber of Small Business Owners and Artisans of Tirebolu ensures that the views and needs of the local business community are accurately represented. Their presence allows the project to integrate real-time feedback from enterprises operating in tourism-related sectors such as accommodation, food, retail, and local products, aligning economic expectations with the project's outputs.

The remaining members of the Steering Committee contribute institutional perspectives and sector-specific expertise. The Tirebolu Sub-Governorate brings regional coordination capacity and supports alignment with broader public administration frameworks. The Social Assistance Foundation contributes knowledge on the social profile of the community, helping the Committee remain sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups. The Youth and Sports Directorate represents the younger population of the town and provides insights into youth engagement, especially for influencer events. The Police Department contributes to discussions on safety and public order, a key dimension for any tourism plan. The Agriculture Directorate provides a rural economic development perspective, offering insights on integrating agrotourism and local product value chains. The Tirebolu Faculty of Communication serves as an academic and technical advisor on strategic communication and visibility, bringing expertise on narrative design, branding, and media outreach. Lastly, the Nature Protection and National Parks Directorate assists environmental sustainability is considered in every strategic decision, particularly those involving coastal and highland ecosystems. Each of these

institutions contributes data, policy feedback, and expert opinions to support a participatory, well-informed, and balanced steering process.

Monitoring Arrangements and Follow-up Plans

The Eco-Tirebolu Project will implement a structured four-level monitoring system to ensure continuous oversight and adaptive management throughout the action's implementation. The model provides clarity for both internal coordination and external accountability, using regular reporting and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and inform decision-making.

First, internal coordination will be managed through weekly progress meetings held by the Project Core Team (PCT). These meetings will bring together the project manager, assistant, visibility expert, and SUTP expert to discuss weekly implementation tasks, timelines, and emerging issues. The meeting will serve to ensure timely progress, adjust schedules if necessary, and maintain consistency in operational delivery. All decisions and follow-up items will be documented for internal tracking.

Secondly, a broader monthly review will be conducted involving both the PCT and the Project Support Team (PST). These meetings will include relevant municipal experts from departments such as accounting, infrastructure, promotion, and agriculture, as well as two designated municipal volunteers. The teams will review cumulative progress, check compliance with the budget and work plan, and coordinate between different municipal departments. These reviews provide a platform to identify bottlenecks and adjust implementation methods when needed.

In addition to these internal layers, quarterly meetings of the Project Steering Committee will ensure strategic oversight. This committee, composed of stakeholder representatives, will review formal quarterly progress reports prepared by the project team, assess the achievement of project results, and provide direction for high-level decisions. The Steering Committee will also validate risks identified by the PCT and evaluate alignment with broader goals.

Finally, the National Urbanization Agency, as the Contracting Authority under the Green Cities Grant Programme, will conduct regular monitoring visits to Tirebolu. These visits will verify physical implementation, assess financial and narrative reporting, and confirm compliance with EU grant requirements. This external review will ensure transparency and reinforce accountability.

Internal and External Evaluation

Evaluation is a critical component of development projects, ensuring that resources are used efficiently, activities are aligned with objectives, and outcomes are achieved as planned. Evaluation provides a structured approach to measuring progress, identifying challenges early, and supporting evidence-based decision-making. In the Eco-Tirebolu Project, evaluation will serve not only as a tool for accountability but also as a mechanism for learning and improving implementation quality. A well-designed evaluation model strengthens stakeholder trust, ensures compliance with funding rules, and helps document the project's value for replication and future planning. Both internal and external evaluation processes are therefore essential to guide the project from start to finish.

The internal evaluation will be managed by the Project Core Team (PCT), which will conduct weekly monitoring and prepare short reports on activity progress, participation, and use of funds. These reports will be reviewed during monthly management meetings that include both PCT and the Project Support Team (PST), allowing for shared analysis and timely adjustments. The municipal accounting unit will regularly check financial processes and report to the Steering Committee, which will meet quarterly to evaluate overall project performance. This internal evaluation structure promotes early

problem identification, ensures that implementation stays on track, and allows key decisions to be made with up-to-date information.

External evaluation will be carried out by the Contracting Authority, following PRAG rules. Since the Eco-Tirebolu Project does not allocate budget for hiring a third-party evaluator, external monitoring will be led by the Authority's own evaluation unit. Three separate evaluations (two physical visits and one online) will assess the project's impact and relevance. The evaluators will conduct interviews, observe project activities, and review documentation. Draft findings will be shared with the project team for feedback, and final results will be included in the final reports to ensure transparency and learning across the programme.

Visibility of Action and EU Contribution

The Eco-Tirebolu Project will place strong emphasis on visibility and communication activities to ensure the European Union's financial contribution is clearly and consistently acknowledged. A communication and visibility plan will be prepared at the start of the project and implemented throughout its lifecycle. All materials, including reports, banners, training documents, press releases, and social media posts, will feature the EU emblem and the statement "Funded by the European Union," in line with EU Visibility Guidelines.

Planned visibility activities will cover both traditional and digital communication channels. At key moments (such as the project launch, the adoption of the Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan (SUTP), and the final conference) press releases will be prepared and shared with local media outlets. Social media platforms will be used to publish updates, highlight results, and increase community engagement. A dedicated project webpage hosted on the Municipality's site will include key documents, videos, and visibility materials. Workshops and training sessions will feature banners, roll-ups, and EU-branded participant kits.

All visibility activities will fully comply with the EU Visibility Guidelines, including the correct use of the EU logo, clear recognition of EU funding, and the communication of accurate and consistent messages.

2.1.3. Indicative action plan for implanting the action (max 4 pages)

Year 1													
Activity	Half-year 1						Half-year 2						Implementing body
	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Inception													Municipality
Prep. A.1.1.1.													Municipality
Imp. A.1.1.1.													Municipality
Prep. A.2.2.1.													Municipality
Imp. A.2.2.1.													Municipality
Prep. A.1.1.2.													Municipality
Imp. A.1.1.2.													Municipality
Prep. A.2.2.2													Association
Imp. A.2.2.2													Association
Prep. A.1.1.3.													Association
Imp. A.1.1.3.													Association
Prep. A.1.2.1.													Association
Imp. A.1.2.1.													Association
Prep. A.1.2.2.													Municipality
Imp. A.1.2.2.													Municipality
Prep. A.2.1.1.													Municipality
Imp. A.2.1.1.													Municipality
Prep. A.2.1.2.													Association
Imp. A.2.1.2.													Association
Prep. A.1.2.3.													Municipality
Imp. A.1.2.3.													Municipality
Prep. A.2.1.3.													Municipality
Imp. A.2.1.3.													Municipality
Prep. A.2.2.3.													Municipality
Imp. A.2.2.3.													Municipality
Closing													Municipality
M&E													SC / CA / LI

2.1.4. Sustainability of the Action (max 3 pages)

Expected Long-Term Benefits

The Eco-Tirebolu Project is designed to generate long-lasting outcomes that extend beyond its implementation period, resulting in meaningful and sustainable transformations for its target groups and final beneficiaries. These benefits can be observed across four key dimensions: technical, economic, social, and policy. By embedding change in local systems, institutions, and behaviours, the project aims to deliver outcomes that become part of Tirebolu's development trajectory.

On a *technical level*, the project will contribute to a durable increase in the knowledge and capacity of both municipal experts and local stakeholders. Through the preparation and implementation of the Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan (SUTP), municipal departments will develop advanced planning, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement skills. Simultaneously, tourism actors and small business owners will gain practical expertise in sustainable tourism, service quality, and digital promotion. The long-term outcome will be the normalization of sustainability-oriented planning and tourism development practices. These capacities will not only influence current actions but will also shape how future local development initiatives are planned and implemented.

Economically, the project seeks to initiate structural change in the local tourism economy. While immediate outputs such as trained SMEs or launched initiatives are valuable, the deeper impact lies in the improved resilience and competitiveness of Tirebolu's local economy. As tourism becomes more diversified and community-driven, new business models are likely to emerge, with increasing visitor numbers, longer stays, and higher local spending. Over time, this will strengthen the local labor market, create stable employment opportunities, and support household income growth. Moreover, the promotion of eco-tourism and nature-based products can help position Tirebolu as a destination aligned with global sustainability trends, attracting private investment and reducing reliance on seasonal economic cycles.

Socially, Eco-Tirebolu will promote greater inclusion and community ownership. The participatory processes embedded in the project (from stakeholder consultations to the Steering Committee) are designed to strengthen civic engagement and trust in local governance. Through targeted training and involvement, vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and low-income artisans will gain voice and visibility. The long-term social outcome is an increase in social capital and cohesion, as communities become more connected, informed, and capable of contributing to and benefiting from local development processes. By nurturing a culture of collaboration, the project will help to reduce inequalities in access to services, information, and economic opportunity.

At the *policy level*, the project is expected to lead to enduring changes in how Tirebolu Municipality approaches strategic planning and stakeholder coordination. The institutionalization of the SUTP as an official municipal roadmap will serve as a guiding framework for future decision-making, budget allocation, and interdepartmental cooperation. The participatory model developed during this project is likely to be adopted for other municipal plans, creating a new standard of inclusive planning. Additionally, the project's visibility and documentation may serve as a model for replication in other towns, encouraging the adoption of similar approaches in regional or national urban development agendas.

In conclusion, the Eco-Tirebolu Project is structured to deliver durable outcomes that improve local capacities, economic structures, social inclusion, and policy frameworks. The project's true value lies in its ability to embed sustainable practices and partnerships mindsets into Tirebolu's development landscape for years to come.

Risk Analysis and Contingency Plan

In Eco-Tirebolu, PM² risk management strategy is applied, using the Risk Score method where Risk Score = Likelihood × Impact (each scored 1–5). This will allow the prioritisation of risks effectively. Risk type labels: P for Physical, Enviro for Environmental, Po for Political, Eco for Economic, and S for Social.

Risk Description	Risk Likelihood	Risk Impact	Risk Score	Risk Type	Concerned Output	Mitigation
Internet outage during trainings	1	4	4	P	Output 1	Ensure backup internet connection
Venue infrastructure problem	2	4	8	P	Output 1	Pre-check venues before activities
Heavy rainfall affects fieldwork	4	3	12	Enviro	Output 3	Keep indoor backup plans ready
Waste from printed materials	2	3	6	Enviro	Output 4	Prioritise digital distribution
Local elections and policy change	3	3	9	Po	Output 2	Get pre-approval from city council
Policy shift in tourism priorities	2	4	8	Po	Output 2	Maintain dialogue with authorities
Rising inflation affects budget	4	4	16	Eco	All Outputs	Include 10% contingency reserve
Exchange rate fluctuation	3	3	9	Eco	Output 3	Convert early and fix prices in EUR
Low SME engagement in activities	3	4	12	S	Output 1	Tailor sessions to SME needs
Community resistance to change	2	4	8	S	Output 2	Build trust via early outreach

Multiplier Effects

Eco-Tirebolu is designed to generate strong multiplier effects through the replication, extension, cross-fertilisation, and sharing of knowledge based on activities planned within the project's scope. Its model for promoting sustainable urban tourism (SUT) through local capacity-building and participatory planning offers clear potential for *replication* in other coastal towns with similar socio-economic profiles. *Extension* is achievable by adapting training materials and toolkits to different audiences, such as local cooperatives or youth organisations. The project's inclusive structure also encourages *cross-fertilisation* by bringing together stakeholders from different sectors (tourism, education, civil society, and local government) creating a collaborative model that enriches

institutional learning. Knowledge sharing is ensured through the publication of the project outputs (including guides, activity results, and visibility materials) on digital platforms managed by the municipality and its association partner. These resources will remain available for other municipalities and associations interested in developing similar initiatives. By grounding its approach in actual deliverables, Eco-Tirebolu ensures realistic and scalable multiplier effects.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a guiding principle of the Eco-Tirebolu project, ensuring that its impact extends well beyond the implementation period. In line with EU priorities and the European Green Deal, the project adopts a holistic sustainability approach covering financial, institutional, policy-level, and environmental dimensions. Rather than relying on future assumptions, Eco-Tirebolu embeds sustainability directly into its activities, partnerships, and governance models, fostering long-term local ownership, policy integration, and environmental responsibility across all stages of project implementation and beyond.

Eco-Tirebolu ensures financial sustainability by integrating key actions (such as local tourism coordination and stakeholder engagement) into the municipal annual work plan. Costs for basic functions like regular stakeholder meetings and plan updates will be covered by the municipal budget. Furthermore, the partnership with the association allows access to additional funding and in-kind contributions beyond the project lifecycle.

Institutional sustainability is secured through the formal assignment of trained municipal staff to SUT-related responsibilities after project completion. Coordination mechanisms, such as the Steering Committee and stakeholder network, will be maintained within municipal structures. Project-developed tools and workflows will be embedded in internal planning procedures, ensuring ongoing ownership and continuation of project outcomes within existing governance systems.

In case of political sustainability, The Sustainable Urban Tourism Plan (SUTP), developed during the project, will be formally adopted as part of the municipality's strategic planning framework. This adoption transforms the plan from a project output into a permanent municipal reference tool, guiding long-term tourism policy. The project also sets a precedent for integrating participatory methods and sustainability criteria into local planning processes.

Eco-Tirebolu promotes environmental sustainability through digital-first communication, minimised printing, and the use of recyclable materials. The SUTP itself encourages low-impact tourism practices, eco-certification, and protection of natural heritage. By promoting a green economy and embedding environmental considerations in tourism development, the project contributes to long-term ecological preservation and climate-conscious local policy.

100% Carbon Off-setting

The Eco-Tirebolu project adopts a 100% carbon offsetting methodology, ensuring that all emissions generated throughout implementation are compensated through verified environmental actions. A total of 300 working days were considered for calculating daily office emissions. Events lasting half a day were combined to determine their full-day equivalents, while full-day activities and the 5-day study visit to Portugal were fully included. Within Portugal, approximately 1,000 km of local travel and 1,500 km of intercity travel will be carried out using public transportation (trains and buses), with emissions calculated based on transport-specific emission factors. The international flight to Portugal was already accounted for in the project's travel budget, including a dedicated offsetting line. Hotel stays (35 nights in a 4-star facility), 6 days of car rental, and 30 km/day for local travel during influencer site visits were also factored into the footprint. Additional emissions were calculated from

electronic devices (based on average laptop emissions) and office supplies, using per-dollar emission estimates. Social media reach was included by estimating the impact of 75,000 viewers watching 10-second videos. The project's total carbon footprint is estimated at 12.5 tonnes of CO₂. To offset this, €1,000 will be spent on certified tree planting under the Indirect Costs category, achieving full carbon neutrality.

Item	Unit	Co2/kg	Total	Reference
Total HR Working Days	300	3,50	1050	circularecology.com
Portugal Accommodation 4*	35	18	630	fairhospitality.com
Portugal Inner-City	1000	0,11	110	carbonfootprint.com
Portugal Inter-City	1500	0,033	49,50	carbonfootprint.com
Events in Total	335	12,33	4130	myclimate.org
Car Hire (6 days * 30km)	180	0,146	26	bvrl.co.uk
Office Electronics	3	500	1500	medium.com
Other Supplies	701	0,4	280	decarbonapp.com
Social Media Outreach (75000 * 10 seconds)	750000	0,01	4790	comparethemarket.com.au
Total CO2	12567,36 kg			

2.1.5. Logical framework

Results	Results chain	Indicator	FNLC	Unit of measure	Baseline (2025)	Target	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact (Overall objective)	Tirebolu becomes a sustainable and attractive tourism destination contributing to local economic development and cultural preservation	decrease in unemployment rate	No	%	% 16,4 unemployment	% 10 by 2032	Employment agency stats	N/A
		number of new hotels	No	Number of hotels	3	5 by 2032	Business licences; and applications to municipality	N/A
Results	Outcome 1: Institutional and Strategic Capacity of Tirebolu Improved for Sustainable Urban Tourism Development	municipal staff assigned to tourism roles	No	Number	0 (do not exist)	2 by 2030	Municipal organizational chart	Municipal staffing remains stable; Tourism roles gain support
		public/NGO institutions citing Tirebolu SUTP in official documents	No	Number	0 (do not exist)	5 by 2030	Copies of official texts	Stakeholders recognize SUTP relevance; Policy documents reference Tirebolu
	Outcome 2: Market Opportunities and Stakeholder Engagement in Tirebolu is Enhanced	new or significantly improved tourism products	No	Number	0 (do not count current products)	10 by 2030	Photo documentation; product licences	Local entrepreneurs remain active; Market demand supports innovation
		influencers visiting Tirebolu for engagement	No	Number	2 (by the end of the project)	10 by 2030	#tirebolu hastags, social media posts	Influencers maintain regional interest; Campaigns attract social media attention
Outputs	Output 1 to Outcome 1: Capacity of key institutions strengthened and organizational structures aligned for effective sustainable tourism governance.	participants certified	No	Number	0 (no certified personnel)	12 by 2027	Training attendance logs and certification records	Stakeholders attend and contribute consistently throughout dialogues, drafting sessions, and public hearings with aligned priorities and commitment.
		Benchmarking report produced	No	Document	0 (do not exist)	1 by 2027	Finalised benchmarking report document	
	Output 2 to Outcome	Sustainable	No	Document	0	1 by 2027	Municipal Council	Participants engage actively

	1: Comprehensive urban tourism plan created through participatory, evidence-based process	Urban Tourism Plan			(do not exist)		decision	in trainings, believe in funding opportunities, and represent a diverse, motivated group in the EcoConnect Hub.
		stakeholder institutions involved in the process	No	Number	0 (process not yet started)	20 by 2027	Participants lists, attendee sheets, Members of Eco-Hub	
	Output 1 to Outcome 2: Local businesses gain skills and networks to deliver high-value sustainable tourism products	businesses trained	No	Number	0 (no such training held)	70 by 2027	List of participants, attendee sheets	Media covers events, influencers receive high engagement, and key stakeholders participate meaningfully in the opening and closing events.
		coordination mechanisms established	No	Mechanism	0 (do not exist)	EcoConnect Hub by 2027	List of member institutions, Municipal decision issued	
	Output 2 to Outcome 2: Tirebolu's sustainable tourism brand gains visibility and attraction in target markets	people reached through influencer-led content	No	Number	0 (do not exist)	75000+ by 2027	Social media analytics (views, reach, impressions)	Strong institutional support, smooth coordination, expert availability, active participation, and favorable external conditions enable successful implementation and collaboration.
		media articles or news features			0	7+ by 2027	Press clippings, media monitoring reports	

Activities Matrix

<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Indicative inputs and amounts</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
	Inception Period (M1)	<i>PM (20 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (2 days x 300€) + Equipment (1951€)</i>	Timely recruitment, procurement and partner alignment
Output 1.1. Municipal staff equipped and structures aligned for sustainable tourism governance effectiveness.	1.1.1 SUT Ambassadors	<i>PM (10 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (2 days x 300€) + Event (1960 €)</i>	Institutional commitment to participation; active participation from partners to role play and action plan development
	1.1.2. EU Study Mission	<i>PM (20 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (7 days x 300€) + Event (12124 €)</i>	Smooth communication with Portuguese authorities; Portuguese staff are available and willing to inform the delegation.
	1.1.3. Case-Clinic Workshop	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (4 days x 300€) + Event (1750 €)</i>	Participants prepare relevant case studies in advance; University experts are available to moderate group work.
ensive urban tourism plan created through participatory,	1.2.1. Local Lens Dialogues	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (4 days x 300€) + Event (1200 €)</i>	Invited stakeholders attend the session; participants openly express their views

<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Indicative inputs and amounts</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
	1.2.2. Drafting the Vision	<i>PM (40 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (5 days x 300€)</i>	Drafting sessions are uninterrupted and effectively scheduled; stakeholder priorities remain consistent
	1.2.3. Plan in Progress	<i>PM (10 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (3 days x 300€) + Visibility Expert (3 days x 300 €) + Event (10000 €)</i>	Local and regional media shows interest to event; weather conditions allow outside event
Output 2.1. Local businesses gain skills and networks to deliver high-value sustainable tourism products.	2.1.1. Eco-Product Laboratory	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (4 days x 300€) + Event (3500 €)</i>	Participants attend, engage actively and share ideas.
	2.1.2. Finance for Growth	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (3 days x 300€) + Event (2000 €)</i>	Participants are motivated and believe funding is attainable.
	2.1.3. EcoConnect Hub	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + SUTP Expert (3 days x 300€) + Event (600 €)</i>	A diverse range of stakeholders is represented in the EcoConnect Hub.
Output 2.2. Tirebolu's sustainable tourism brand gains visibility and attraction in target markets.	2.2.1. Start of the Journey	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + Visibility Expert (4 days x 300 €) + Event (4000 €)</i>	Media shows interest in project
	2.2.2. See, Share, Sustain	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + Visibility Expert (10 days x 300 €) + Influencer Deal (6000€) + Car Hire (600€)</i>	Posts receive strong engagement through shares, comments, and likes.

<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Indicative inputs and amounts</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
	2.2.3. Legacy in Motion	<i>PM (15 days x 90€) + Visibility Expert (3 days x 300 €) + Event (4000 €)</i>	Key stakeholders attend the event.
	Closing Period (M12)	<i>PM (20 days x 90€)</i>	Final outputs delivered as scheduled

2.1.6. Budget

2.1.6.1. Budget of the Action

Costs	Unit	# of units	Unit value (in EUR)	Total Cost (in EUR)
1. Human Resources				
1.1 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, local staff)				
1.1.1 Project Manager	Per day	240	90	21600
1.1.2 SUTP Expert	Per day	40	300	12000
1.2.3. Visibility Expert	Per day	20	300	6000
1.2 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, expat/int. staff)	Per month			
1.3 Per diems for missions/travel				
1.3.1 Portugal	Per diem	35	192	6720
Subtotal Human Resources				46320
2. Travel				
2.1 International travel				
2.1.1. Portugal Study Visit	Per flight	7	750	5250
2.1.2. CO ₂ Off-setting	Per flight	7	22	154
2.2 Local transportation	Per month			
Subtotal Travel				5404
3. Equipment and supplies				
3.1 Purchase or rent of vehicles	Per day	6	100	600
3.2 Furniture, computer equipment				
3.2.1. Laptop	Per Unit	1	400	400
3.2.2. Projector	Per Unit	1	350	350
3.3 Machines, tools...				
3.3.1. Printer	Per Unit	1	400	400
3.3.2. Flipchart	Per Unit	1	100	100

3.4 Spare parts/equipment for machines, tools	Lump sum	1	500	500
3.5 Other (Licenses for creative digital platforms)	Lump sum	1	355	201
Subtotal Equipment and supplies				2551
4. Project office				
4.1 Vehicle costs	Per month			
4.2 Office rent	Per month			
4.3 Consumables - office supplies	Per month			
4.4 Other services (tel/fax, electricity/heating, maintenance)	Per month			
Subtotal Project office				0
5. Other costs, services				
5.1 Publications				
5.2 Studies, research				
5.3 Expenditure verification/Audit				
5.4 Evaluation costs				
5.5 Translation, interpreters				
5.6 Financial services (bank guarantee costs etc.)				
5.7 Costs of conferences/seminars				
5.7.1. SUT Ambassadors Training	Per person	28	70	1960
5.7.2. Case-Clinic Workshop	Per person	25	70	1750
5.7.3. Local Lens Dialogues	Per person	30	40	1200
5.7.4. Eco-Product Laboratory	Per person	50	70	3500
5.7.5. Finance for Growth	Per person	50	40	2000
5.7.6. EcoConnect Hub	Per person	15	40	600
5.8. Communication activities				
5.8.1. Start of the Journey	Per person	100	40	4000
5.8.2. See, Share, Sustain	Per post	2	3000	6000
5.8.1. Legacy in Motion	Per person	100	40	4000
Subtotal Other costs, services				25010
6. Other (e.g. activities with their related visibility costs)				
6.1 Plan in Progress	Per event	1	10000	10000
Subtotal Other				10000

7.1 Subtotal direct eligible costs of the action: headings 1-6 without project office heading				89285
7.2 Subtotal direct eligible costs of the action: all headings (1-6)				89285
8. Indirect costs (maximum 7% of 7.1, subtotal of direct eligible costs of the action headings 1-6 without project office heading)				6249,95
9. Total eligible costs of the action, excluding contingency reserve and volunteers' work (7.2 + 8)				95534,95
10.1 Provision for contingency reserve (maximum 5% of 7.2 'Subtotal of direct eligible costs of the action')				4464,25
10.2 Volunteers' work	Per day			
11. Total eligible costs (9+10)				99999,2
12. - Taxes - Contributions in kind				
13. Total accepted¹¹ costs of the action (11+12)				99999,2

2.1.6.2. Justification of the budget for the action

	Clarification of the budget items	Justification of the estimated costs
1. Human Resources		

1.1 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, local staff)		
1.1.1 Project Manager	The Project Manager oversees planning, coordination, reporting, and quality assurance of all project activities.	240 days × 90 €/day based on national average rates for similar senior positions.
1.1.2 SUTP Expert	Provides strategic input and technical expertise for drafting the Sustainable Urban Tourism Action Plan.	40 days × 300 €/day based on expert daily fee under key expert status.
1.2.3. Visibility Expert	Designs and oversees communication tools, campaign materials, and visibility strategy of the project.	20 days × 300 €/day reflecting standard key expert rate for EU-funded visibility services.
1.2 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, expat/int. staff)		
1.3 Per diems for missions/travel		
1.3.1 Portugal	Covers meals and accommodation for 7 participants during 5-day study visit in Portugal.	5 days × 7 people × €192 (EC daily rate for Portugal per diem expenses).
Subtotal Human Resources		
2. Travel		
2.1 International travel		
2.1.1. Portugal Study Visit	Covers round-trip international flights for 7 participants attending the study visit in Portugal.	7 tickets × €750 based on Turkish Airlines average online fare at planning stage.
2.1.2. CO2 Off-setting	Ensures environmental responsibility by offsetting emissions for study visit flights to Portugal.	7 tickets × €22 based on Turkish Airlines' official CO ₂ offset calculator.
2.2 Local transportation		
Subtotal Travel		
3. Equipment and supplies		
3.1 Purchase or rent of vehicles	Covers transport of influencers across multiple locations for filming and promotional activities.	6 rental days × €100/day based on online offers from local vehicle rental providers.
3.2 Furniture, computer equipment		
3.2.1. Laptop	Used for reporting, presentations, workshops, and content creation during project activities.	€400 estimated from average online prices for mid-range laptops suitable for project needs.
3.2.2. Projector	Used during seminars and workshops for delivering visual presentations and materials.	€300 based on standard projector prices from online suppliers.
3.3 Machines, tools...		
3.3.1. Printer	Used to print agendas, training materials, and visual aids during activities.	€400 based on online pricing of multi-function printer/scanner suitable for project activities.
3.3.2. Flipchart	Supports interactive sessions during training and	€100 based on average online cost of standard flipchart

	workshop events.	stands.
3.4 Spare parts/equipment for machines, tools	Includes toner, projector bulbs, printer paper, and essential cables for uninterrupted sessions.	€500 based on total average cost from online basket of required replacement items.
3.5 Other (Licenses for creative digital platforms)	Covers licences for website templates and social media tools for online visibility.	€355 based on pricing of selected tools from official online vendor listings.
<i>Subtotal Equipment and supplies</i>		
4. Project office		
4.1 Vehicle costs		
4.2 Office rent		
4.3 Consumables - office supplies		
4.4 Other services (tel/fax, electricity/heating, maintenance)		
<i>Subtotal Project office</i>		
5. Other costs, services		
5.1 Publications		
5.2 Studies, research		
5.3 Expenditure verification/Audit		
5.4 Evaluation costs		
5.5 Translation, interpreters		
5.6 Financial services (bank guarantee costs etc.)		
5.7 Costs of conferences/seminars		
5.7.1. SUT Ambassadors Training	Covers venue, microphone, lunch, and coffee breaks for 14 participants over 2 full days.	Based on average of three quotations received from local 3-star hotels offering similar services.
5.7.2. Case-Clinic Workshop	Covers venue, microphone, lunch, and coffee breaks for 25 participants over 1 full day.	Based on average of three quotations received from local 3-star hotels offering similar services.
5.7.3. Local Lens Dialogues	Covers venue, microphone, and coffee breaks for 30 participants over half a day.	Based on average of three quotations received from local 3-star hotels offering similar services.
5.7.4. Eco-Product Laboratory	Covers venue, microphone, lunch, and coffee breaks for 50 participants over 1 full day.	Based on average of three quotations received from local 3-star hotels offering similar services.
5.7.5. Finance for Growth	Covers venue, microphone, and coffee breaks for 50 participants over half a day.	Based on average of three quotations received from local 3-star hotels offering similar services.
5.7.6. EcoConnect Hub	Covers venue, microphone, and coffee breaks for 15 participants over half a day.	Based on average of three quotations received from local 3-star hotels offering similar services.
5.8. Communication activities		

5.8.1. Start of the Journey	Covers venue, microphone, and coffee breaks for 100 participants over half a day.	Based on average of three quotations received from local 3-star hotels offering similar services.
5.8.2. See, Share, Sustain	Covers 2 sponsored posts by 2 influencers to promote project visibility and outreach.	€3,000 per post based on online price offers from influencer marketing agencies.
5.8.1. Legacy in Motion	Covers venue, microphone, and coffee breaks for 100 participants over half a day.	Based on average of three quotations received from local 3-star hotels offering similar services.
<i>Subtotal Other costs, services</i>		
6. Other (e.g. activities with their related visibility costs)		
6.1 Plan in Progress	Covers stage setup, sound system, branding, catering, staff, and logistics for Tirebolu SUTP celebration event. 100 participants	€10,000 lump sum based on average of 3 detailed offers from local MICE service providers.
<i>Subtotal Other</i>		
10.2 Volunteers' work		
12. - Taxes - Contributions in kind		

2.1.6.3. Expected Sources of Funding & Summary of Estimated Amounts of the Action

Expected sources of funding (costs-based component or actions fully costs-based)		Amount (EUR)	Percentage (%)
EU/EDF contribution sought in this application (A)		€ 89.999,28	90%
CO-FINANCING (1+2+3+4) (B)			
1. Other contributions (applicant, other donors etc)			
<i>Name</i>	<i>Conditions</i>		
<i>Tirebolu Municipality</i>	No conditions. Co-financing by Municipality.	€ 9.999,92	10%
2. Revenue from the action			
To be inserted if applicable and allowed by the guidelines:			
3. In-kind contributions			
4. Volunteers' work			
Expected TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS (A)+(B)		€ 99.999,20	

2.1.7. PADOR Registration Form

In this section of the application, an annex document is included within the “Documents to be filled” folder, provided as a .rar file. Inside that folder, applicants will find a subfolder named “Full Application”, which contains the file “e13_organisation_data_form_offline_en.pdf.”

This file relates to the PADOR offline registration, which is a process required by the European Commission to collect legal, financial, and administrative data about organisations applying for EU funding. PADOR stands for Potential Applicant Data Online Registration which is a system used by the European Commission to store and manage information about applicant organisations.

A step-by-step guide for PADOR:

<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/spaces/ExactExternalWiki/pages/33522284/e-Calls+PADOR>

2.2. Lead Applicant's Experience

i) For similar actions

Name of the lead applicant: Tirebolu Municipality					
Project title: Tirebolu Coastal Biodiversity Action Plan		Sector: Environment & Biodiversity			
Location of the action	Amount of the action (EUR)	Role in the action: coordinator, co-beneficiary, affiliated entity	Donors to the action (name)	Amount contributed (by donor)	Dates (from dd/mm/yyyy to dd/mm/yyyy)
Tirebolu, Türkiye	80,000	Beneficiary	European Union (IPA)	72,000	01/03/2023 to 31/12/2023
Objectives (overall/impact and specific/outcome) and outputs of the action		Overall objective: Strengthen coastal biodiversity resilience in the Eastern Black Sea region. Specific objective: Implement local biodiversity monitoring and citizen engagement programs in Tirebolu. Outputs: Biodiversity inventory, citizen science workshops, coastal clean-up campaigns, policy recommendation report.			
This EU-funded project enhanced local biodiversity protection by engaging citizens and stakeholders in monitoring coastal species and habitats. Through training, fieldwork, and outreach, the project built environmental awareness and provided evidence for future coastal planning.					

ii) Other actions

Name of the lead applicant: Tirebolu Municipality					
Project title: Tirebolu Women in Leadership Initiative		Sector: Social Development / Gender Equality			
Location of the action	Amount of the action (EUR)	Role in the action: coordinator, co-beneficiary, affiliated entity	Donors to the action (name)	Amount contributed (by donor)	Dates (from dd/mm/yyyy to dd/mm/yyyy)
Tirebolu, Türkiye	35,000	Beneficiary	Eastern Mediterranean Development Agency	35,000	15/01/2024 to 15/07/2024
Objectives (overall/impact and specific/outcome) and outputs of the action		Overall objective: Strengthen women’s participation in local governance and leadership. Specific objective: Train local women and develop a mentorship model for civic engagement. Outputs: 4 leadership workshops, mentorship guidebook, final policy forum.			
This project supported gender-inclusive governance by training women in leadership skills and facilitating mentorship. With strong local support, the initiative brought together civil society and local institutions to foster a culture of participation and equality.					

2.2. Co-applicant's Experience

i) For similar actions

Name of the lead applicant: Green Tirebolu Association					
Project title: Green Corners: Rooftop Gardening for a Greener Tirebolu		Sector: Urban Environment / Community Gardens			
Location of the action	Amount of the action (EUR)	Role in the action: coordinator, co-beneficiary, affiliated entity	Donors to the action (name)	Amount contributed (by donor)	Dates (from dd/mm/yyyy to dd/mm/yyyy)
Tirebolu, Türkiye	10,000	Coordinator	Self-financed	10,000	01/05/2022 to 30/11/2022
Objectives (overall/impact and specific/outcome) and outputs of the action		Overall objective: Promote sustainable urban living through community rooftop gardening. Specific objective: Pilot rooftop gardens and raise environmental awareness in neighbourhoods. Outputs: 10 rooftop gardens, community events, urban gardening manual.			
Funded solely by the association, this project empowered residents to transform underused rooftops into green spaces. Project encouraged sustainable habits, reduced urban heat, and created social interaction opportunities through practical training and collective gardening.					

ii) Other actions

Name of the lead applicant: Green Tirebolu Association					
Project title: Living Histories of Tirebolu: Youth-Led Memory Archive		Sector: Culture & Youth Engagement			
Location of the action	Amount of the action (EUR)	Role in the action: coordinator, co-beneficiary, affiliated entity	Donors to the action (name)	Amount contributed (by donor)	Dates (from dd/mm/yyyy to dd/mm/yyyy)
Tirebolu, Türkiye	9,000	Coordinator	Ministry of Interior	9,000	01/04/2023 to 30/09/2023
Objectives (overall/impact and specific/outcome) and outputs of the action		Overall objective: Preserve local cultural memory through youth-led oral history collection. Specific objective: Train youth in interview methods and record elderly citizens’ personal histories. Outputs: 50 recorded interviews, digital archive, public exhibition.			
This project engaged local youth in collecting oral histories from older residents of Tirebolu. Project built intergenerational dialogue, preserved cultural memory, and resulted in a digital archive accessible to schools and libraries.					

3. The Lead Applicant

EuropeAid ID number	TR-2025-TIR-MUN001
Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	N/A
Name of the organisation/ Name of natural person	Tirebolu Municipality (Tirebolu Belediyesi)

3.1. Identity

The lead applicant's contact details for the purpose of this action	Mehmet Alparslan ÇANAKOĞLU; macanakoglu@tirebolu.bel.tr ; Çarşı Mahallesi, Gazipaşa Cad. No: 198, 28500 Tirebolu / Giresun, Türkiye; +90 454 411 4016
Abbreviation	N/A
Registration number (or equivalent)	N/A
Date of registration	13 October 1965
Place of registration: city + country	Giresun / Türkiye
Official address of registration	Çarşı Mahallesi, Gazipaşa Cad. No: 198, 28500 Tirebolu / Giresun, Türkiye
Country of registration/ Nationality	Republic of Türkiye / Turkish
VAT number (if applicable)	N/A
Website and e-mail address of the organisation	www.tirebolu.bel.tr
Telephone number: country code + city code + number	+90 454 411 4016
Fax number: country code + city code + number	+90 454 411 2077
Legal status	Profit-Making <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No. NGO <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No.

3.2. Financial identification

Account name and account holder name	Tirebolu Municipality
IBAN/Account number	TR87 0001 0002 3456 7890 1234 56
Currency	EUR
BIC/Swift code	TCZBTR2A
Bank name and branch code	Ziraat Bankası – Tirebolu Branch (Branch Code: 1234)
Address of bank, P.O box, city, country	Atatürk Caddesi No:45, P.K. 101, Tirebolu, Türkiye


4. The Co-Applicant(s)

	Co-applicant no.1
EuropeAid ID number	TR-2025-GTA-002
Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	N/A
Name of the organisation	Green Tirebolu Association
The co-applicant's contact details for the purpose of this action	Mustafa Kemal AYDOĞAN
Abbreviation	GTA / YTD (in Turkish)
Registration number (or equivalent)	28-215-042
Date of registration	15 May 2013
Place of registration: city + country	Giresun / Republic of Türkiye,
Official address of registration	Atatürk Caddesi No: 36, Kat: 2; Çarşı Mahallesi, 28500 Tirebolu; Giresun, Türkiye
Country of registration/ Nationality	Republic of Türkiye / Turkish
VAT number (if applicable)	N/A
Website and e-mail address of the organisation	www.yesiltirebolu.org.tr / info@yesiltirebolu.org.tr
Telephone number: country code + city code + number	+90 454 611 23 45
Fax number: country code + city code + number	+90 454 611 23 46
Legal status	Profit-Making <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No. NGO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No.
Value based	<input type="checkbox"/> Political <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Humanistic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral
Is your organisation linked with another entity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, parent entity: (please specify its EuropeAid ID:.....) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, controlled entity(ies) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, family organisation / network entity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, independent
History of cooperation with the lead applicant	The association has collaborated with Tirebolu Municipality since 2019 on environmental awareness, local development initiatives, and joint public events promoting sustainable urban living.

Mandate (for co-applicant(s))

The co-applicant authorise the lead applicant <Tirebolu Municipality> to submit on their behalf the present application form and to sign on their behalf the standard grant contract (Annex G of the guidelines for applicants) (or a Contribution Agreement, where applicable) with Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, General Directorate of European Union and Foreign Relations, Department of European Union Investments ('contracting authority'), as well as, to represent the co-applicant in all matters concerning this grant contract.

I have read and approved the contents of the proposal submitted to the contracting authority. I undertake to comply with the principles of good partnership practice.

Name:	Mustafa Kemal AYDOĞAN
Organisation:	Green Tirebolu Association
Position:	Chair
Signature:	
Date and place:	12.05.2025

5. Affiliated Entity(ies) participating in the action

5.1. Description of the affiliated entity(ies)

	Affiliated entity no.1
EuropeAid ID number	
Full legal name	
Date of registration	
Place of registration: city + country	
Legal status	Profit-Making <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No. NGO <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Value based	<input type="checkbox"/> Political <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Humanistic <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral
If fulfilling the criteria and conditions to be considered as affiliated entity(ies) specify to which entity you are affiliated (lead applicant/co-applicant) detailing the specific nature of the affiliation (i.e. parent entity, family organisation / network entity, etc) and, if any, its EuropeAid ID	
Official address of registration	
Country of registration/ Nationality	
Contact person	
Telephone number: country code + city code + number	
Fax number: country code + city code + number	
E-mail address	
Number of employees	
History of cooperation with the lead applicant/co-applicant	
Category (refer to Section 3.2.1)	
Sector(s) (refer to Section 3.2.2)	
Target group(s) (refer to Section 3.2.3.3)	

5.2 Affiliated entity(ies)'s statement

Important: This application form must be accompanied by a **signed and dated** affiliated entities' statement from **each affiliated entity**, in accordance with the template provided below.

To ensure that the action runs smoothly, the <indicate the name of the contracting authority> (contracting authority) requires all affiliated entity(ies) to acknowledge the principles of set out below.

1. All affiliated entity(ies) must have read the guidelines for applicants and grant application form and understood their role in the action before the application is submitted to the contracting authority.
2. All affiliated entity(ies) must have read the standard grant contract (or Contribution Agreement, where applicable) and understood what their respective obligations under the contract will be if the grant is awarded. They authorise the organisation to which they are affiliated to sign the contract on their behalf with the contracting authority and represent them in all dealings with the contracting authority in the context of the action's implementation.
3. The affiliated entity(ies) must consult regularly with the organisation to which they are affiliated whom, in turn, should keep them fully informed of the progress of the action.
4. All affiliated entity(ies) must receive copies of the reports — narrative and financial — made to the contracting authority.
5. Proposals for substantial changes to the action (e.g. changes in activities that could affect the basic purpose of the action, affiliated entity(ies), etc.) should be agreed by the affiliated entity(ies) before being submitted to the contracting authority.

I have read and approved the contents of the proposal submitted to the contracting authority. I undertake to comply with the principles of good partnership practice.

Name:	
Organisation:	
Position:	
Signature:	
Date and place:	

6. Associates Participating in the Action

Full legal name	Chamber of Small Business Owners and Artisans of Tirebolu
EuropeAid ID number	N/A
Country of registration: city + country	Giresun / Türkiye
Legal status	Public Professional Chamber under Turkish Law No: 5362 on Small Business Owners and Artisans
Official address	İstiklal Mahallesi, Cumhuriyet Caddesi No:15, 28500 Tirebolu, Giresun, Türkiye
Contact person	Yamtar SÜLEMİŞ
Telephone number: country code + city code + number	+90 454 411 30 45
Fax number: country code + city code + number	+90 454 411 30 46
E-mail address	tireboluesnafoda@gmail.com
Number of employees	1
Experience of similar actions, in relation to role in the implementation of the proposed action	The Chamber has actively supported various local economic development activities
History of cooperation with the applicants	The Chamber has a long-standing working relationship with Tirebolu Municipality
Role and involvement in preparing the proposed action	The Chamber contributed to stakeholder consultations during the concept note phase and provided data on the needs and capacities of local artisans and SMEs
Role and involvement in implementing the proposed action	Chamber will specifically support the Output 1.2. and Output 2.1. which are very much related to SMEs

7. Checklist – Full Application Form – For Self-Guidance

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA	To be filled in by the lead applicant
<u>Name of the lead applicant</u>	Tirebolu Municipality
EuropeAid ID number Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	TR-2025-TIR-MUN001
Nationality/country and date of registration	Turkish / Republic of Türkiye / 13 October 1965
Legal status Financial identification	Local authority Tirebolu Municipality TR87 0001 0002 3456 7890 1234 56 (EUR) TCZBTR2A, Ziraat Bankası – Tirebolu Branch (Branch Code: 1234) Atatürk Caddesi No:45, P.K. 101, Tirebolu, Türkiye
<u>Co-applicant</u>	
Name of the co-applicant	Green Tirebolu Association
EuropeAid ID number Participant Identification Code (PIC 9-digit number)	TR-2025-GTA-002
Nationality/country and date of registration	Turkish / Republic of Türkiye / 15 May 2013
Legal status	Civil Society Organization
<u>Affiliated entity</u>	
Name of the affiliated entity	
EuropeAid ID number	
Nationality/country and date of registration	
Legal status:	
Specify to which entity you are affiliated (lead applicant and/or the co-applicant). Specify the kind of affiliation you have with that entity.	

BEFORE SENDING YOUR PROPOSAL, PLEASE CHECK THAT EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA HAVE BEEN MET IN FULL AND TICK THEM OFF	Tick the items off below	
Title of the proposal: < Tirebolu Eco-Tourism Revitalization Project (Eco-Tirebolu)>	Yes	No
PART 1 (ADMINISTRATIVE)	√	
1. The correct grant application form has been used.	√	
2. The declaration by the lead applicant has been filled in and signed.	√	
3. The proposal is typed and is in English	√	
4. One original and 2 copies are included	√	
5. An electronic version of the proposal is enclosed	√	
6. Each co-applicant has completed and signed the mandate and the mandate is included	√	
7. Each affiliated entity(ies) has completed and signed an affiliated entity(ies)'s statement and the statements are included.	N/A	N/A
8. The budget is enclosed, in balance, presented in the format requested, and stated in EUR	√	
9. The logical framework has been completed and is enclosed.	√	
10. PADOR registration form has been completed and the following supporting documents are enclosed: - The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, of each co-applicant (if any) and of each affiliated entity (if any) (where applicable); - The identification form duly completed and signed by each of the applicants; - Where entities without legal personality are eligible as per Section 2.1.1 of the guidelines: a letter must be provided by the legal representative certifying his/her capacity to undertake legal obligations on behalf of the entity and any other documentation requested in the guidelines; - The declaration on honour on exclusion criteria signed by the lead applicant, each co-applicant (if any) and each affiliated entity (if any) (for grants exceeding EUR 15 000); - The external audit report (where applicable); - The copy of the lead applicant's latest accounts (where applicable).	√	
PART 2 (ELIGIBILITY)	√	
11. The action will be implemented in an eligible country and in the minimum required number of eligible regions.	√	
12. The duration of the action is between <8 months> and <12 months> (the minimum and maximum allowed).	√	
13. The requested EU contribution is between <70000 EUR and 100000 EUR > (the minimum and maximum allowed).	√	
14. The requested EU contribution is between <50 %> and <90 %> of the total eligible costs (minimum and maximum percentage allowed). (only applicable where the grants take the form of reimbursement of costs, totally or partially).	√	
15. The amount of financing requested on the basis of result based simplified cost options is supported by appropriate justification in the "justification sheet" of the budget.	√	
16. The requested contribution has not been changed by more than 20 % compared to the amount requested at the concept note stage.	√	


8. Declaration by The Lead Applicant (Full Application)

The lead applicant, represented by the undersigned, being the authorised signatory of the lead applicant, in the context of the present call for proposals, representing any co-applicant(s), affiliated entity(ies) in the proposed action, hereby declares that

- the lead applicant has the sources of financing specified in Section 2 of this application form;
- the lead applicant has sufficient financial capacity to carry out the proposed action or work programme;
- the lead applicant certifies the legal status and the bank account details of the lead applicant, and the legal status of the co-applicant(s) and of the affiliated entity(ies) as reported in part 3, 4, and 5 of this application form;
- the lead applicant, the co-applicant(s) and the affiliated entity(ies) have the professional competences and qualifications specified in Section 2 of this application form;
- the lead applicant undertakes to comply with the obligations laid down in the affiliated entity(ies)'s statement of the grant application form and with the principles of good partnership practice;
- the lead applicant is directly responsible for the preparation, management and implementation of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), if any, and is not acting as an intermediary;
- the lead applicant, the co-applicant(s) and the affiliated entities certify in separate declarations on honour (Annex H) that they are not in any of the situations excluding them from participating in contracts which are listed in Section 2.4.2. of the practical guide (available from the following internet address: <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/2.+Basic+rules>). The lead applicant is fully aware of the obligation to inform the contracting authority without delay of any changes to the declaration;
- the lead applicant, the co-applicant(s) and the affiliated entity(ies) are not in detected in EU restrictive measures as laid down in Section 2.4.1. of the practical guide;
- the lead applicant and each co-applicant and affiliated entity (if any) is in a position to deliver immediately the documents and information requested by the contracting authority if awarded a grant;
- the lead applicant and each co-applicant and affiliated entity (if any) are eligible in accordance with the criteria set out under Sections 2.1.1 of the guidelines for applicants;
- if recommended to be awarded a grant, the lead applicant, the co-applicant(s) and the affiliated entity(ies) accept the contractual conditions as laid down in the standard grant contract annexed to the guidelines for applicants (Annex G) (or the Contribution Agreement, where applicable);
- the lead applicant and each co-applicant and affiliated entity (if any) does not have an established debt to the Union;

We acknowledge that if we participate despite being in any of the situations listed in Section 2.4. of the practical guide or if the declarations or information provided prove to be false we may be subject to rejection from this procedure and to exclusion decisions and/or financial penalties up to 10 % of the total estimated value of the grant being awarded and that this information may be published on the Commission website in accordance with the Financial Regulation in force. We are aware that, for the purposes of safeguarding the EU's financial interests, our personal data may be transferred to internal audit services, to the early detection and exclusion system, to the European Court of Auditors, to the European Public Prosecutor's Office or to the European Anti-Fraud Office.

Signed on behalf of the lead applicant

Name	İrfan DEMİROĞLU
Signature	
Position	Mayor
Date	12.05.2025

ANNEX – IV (What to Expect Next?)

From the moment the grant guidelines are announced, the process is often defined by continuous waiting. However, hearing the news that a project has been awarded funding is an incredibly joyful moment. After months of preparation, writing, collecting documents, and enduring the long anticipation, receiving the message “your project has been selected” fills the entire team with excitement. Yet, especially in institutions receiving European Union funding for the first time, this excitement quickly gives way to anxiety. The official notification from the contracting authority and the subsequent invitation to sign the grant agreement bring a sense of seriousness and formality to the work. This also marks the beginning of the project management phase.

At this point, a flood of activity begins within the institution and generally the most pressing questions is, “How are we going to manage this budget?” This is because the financial tables prepared during the proposal phase, now need to be put into practice. The unit responsible for implementation is likely to rush to the finance and accounting departments, as well as the procurement unit, with meeting requests and a bombardment of questions. Everyone is thinking: How are we going to handle this according to EU rules?

Internal meetings among departments begin. The accounting department in particular, is invited to nearly every meeting. How will the expenditure documents be prepared? Where will the pre-financing be transferred once received? How will the EU budget be recorded in the accounts? If the project team goes on a mission, how will per diems be calculated? How will procurement be carried out? For teams that have previously worked only under national legislation, the reporting, visibility, contract modifications, and audit procedures in EU projects are often full of uncertainties.

It is precisely at this point that understanding the EU project management steps becomes critical for successful implementation. Starting from the signing of the grant agreement, there are seven key steps to be followed throughout the implementation process. This annex chapter of the *Manual* briefly introduces these seven steps and offers a preview for potential grant beneficiaries.

Signing of the Grant Agreement (Step 1)

In projects financed by the European Union, once the evaluation process for the applications submitted under a call for proposals is completed, successful applicants are notified of the results. Before the implementation phase, a grant agreement is prepared for projects that are awarded funding. This agreement establishes the legal and administrative framework to be followed during the project’s implementation. Thus, the use of funds becomes legally binding between the contracting authority and the grant beneficiary.

Certain legal or administrative details that were not included during the proposal will be added during the contract phase. These may include documents related to the institution’s legal status, financial information, bank account details, or documents related to authorized representatives. Additionally, if deemed appropriate by the evaluation committee, some technical or budgetary revisions to the proposal documents may be requested. For instance, certain budget items that do not reflect current market conditions may be re-evaluated with the grant beneficiary.

The grant agreement is a document that contains numerous essential components such as project duration, activity plan, budget structure, payment methods, reporting schedule, visibility obligations,

audit mechanisms, contract amendment conditions, and intellectual property rights. With the signing of the agreement by both parties, the use of funds and the implementation of the project officially begin.

The agreement is regarded as the primary document that forms the legal basis for both the grant beneficiary and the contracting authority throughout the entire implementation period. Therefore, all actions and decisions taken during the project must comply with the terms of the agreement.

Grant Payments (Step 2)

In EU projects, funding is typically provided in several instalments. These payments are made in three stages: pre-financing, interim payments, and the final payment. Following the signing of the grant agreement, a pre-financing payment is made to provide the project with initial capital. This payment represents a certain percentage of the total grant amount and enables the launch of initial activities.

Interim payments are made once specific project milestones are achieved and supported by appropriate reporting. The submission and approval of technical and financial progress reports are prerequisites for the release of interim payments. After the project is completed, the remaining balance is paid through the final payment. However, this is only processed upon submission of the final report and, where applicable, the required deliverables and supporting documents. The final payment also serves as the conclusive assessment of the project and confirms the total grant amount.

Reporting, Deliverables and Visibility Requirements (Step 3)

During the implementation of an EU project, various reporting and deliverable obligations are defined to monitor the project's progress in line with its objectives. At this point, indicators also come into play, meaning that achieving the indicators is the most important part. Within the scope of the grant agreement, technical and financial reports must be prepared at specified intervals and submitted to the contracting authority. These reports are expected to demonstrate that the activities carried out, expenditures made, and results achieved are in full compliance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

Technical reports include a detailed account of the activities carried out, the targets achieved, the challenges encountered, and the measures taken in response. Financial reports, on the other hand, provide an itemised breakdown of expenditure categories. Specific deliverables identified in the contract (such as written reports, software developed within the project, technical drawings, or training materials) are also subject to reporting and are tied to specific submission deadlines.

Visibility is also one of the fundamental requirements of EU projects. The support of the European Union must be clearly acknowledged in all project-related outputs. This includes placing the EU emblem and the phrase "Funded by the European Union" on project materials, social media posts, and events.

Monitoring, Checks, Audits and Reviews (Step 4)

Throughout or following the implementation of EU projects, monitoring and audit activities are carried out by the European Commission or authorised contracting authorities. The purpose of the monitoring is to ensure that the project proceeds in accordance with the terms set out in the grant

agreement. The process typically begins during the project implementation phase and continues until the project results are achieved.

The grant agreement clearly specifies the activities to be undertaken, project duration, total budget, EU contribution, reporting obligations, and control mechanisms to be applied. Within this framework, the checks conducted assess the consistency of project outputs and reports with the work plan presented in the application form.

Financial audits verify the eligibility of expenditures by examining the beneficiary's accounting records and documents. In this process, expenditures are expected to be carried out in compliance with the grant agreement rules, supported by complete documentation, and reflected consistently across accounting records and reports.

Review processes in particular, apply to high-budget, long-term, or strategically important projects and involve more detailed assessments of overall success and sustainability.

Amendments to Grant Agreements (Step 5)

During the implementation of EU projects, unforeseen circumstances or changes in implementation conditions may require amendments to the grant agreement. These amendments may involve administrative or technical elements and are only valid if made in writing and mutually agreed upon by the parties.

The justifications for such amendments are usually linked to unexpected developments in the project's implementation context. For example, an activity or investment foreseen in the proposal might end up being carried out by another public institution. Certain changes between budget lines may also be necessary. In addition, changes in the beneficiary's legal status or bank account information may require an amendment to the agreement. However, in practice, grant agreement amendments are most commonly requested by beneficiaries to extend the project duration.

For amendment requests to be valid, they must be prepared in accordance with the procedures set out in the grant agreement, submitted with the necessary supporting documents, and approved by the contracting authority. Amendments enter into force upon the signature or written approval of the final contracting party and take effect from the date agreed upon in the amendment.

However, in order to safeguard legal certainty and the principle of equal treatment, the "General Conditions" included in grant agreements cannot be amended. These conditions are published together with the call for proposals and are binding for all applicants. Therefore, while adapting the agreement provisions to the current circumstances is possible during implementation, such changes must occur within clearly defined limits.

Ownership of Results (Step 6)

In EU-funded projects, the ownership of the outputs produced (unless otherwise stated in the agreement) remains with the beneficiary organisations implementing the project. The term "results" refers to any tangible or intangible outcomes generated through project activities, including the associated rights such as data, information, written documents, software, methodologies, technical drawings, training materials, and any other products subject to copyright.

However, under the grant agreement, the European Commission also retains specific rights of use over these results. These may include the right to use, disseminate, reproduce, make publicly available, or cite the project results as references in other contexts.

The Commission's rights of use are directly linked to the public nature of the funding, meaning the EU tax payers. Accordingly, knowledge and outputs developed in the public interest should not remain confined to project partners but be made accessible to a broader audience when necessary. While beneficiaries retain ownership of these results, they grant the Commission a "free, non-transferable, and irrevocable" right of use. These conditions are explicitly stated in the grant agreement and are accepted by all parties involved.

Record Keeping (Step 7)

In EU-funded projects, a document management process is foreseen to ensure transparency and accountability during implementation. In most grant programmes, an online grant management module is provided to beneficiaries. The relevant documents are stored in this system by the contracting authority. However, beneficiaries are still required to retain relevant records and supporting documents throughout the project and for a certain period after its completion. Depending on the contract conditions, these records must generally be kept accessible for 5 to 10 years from the project's end date. During this period, audits or inspections may be carried out by the European Commission, the European Court of Auditors, or independent audit bodies.

The records include expenditure documents (invoices, payment receipts, payrolls), activity reports, contracts, procurement-related documents, travel documents, participant lists, visual materials, and meeting minutes. In addition, beneficiaries are expected to retain detailed accounting records relating to the bookkeeping of each expenditure item.

No Big Deal

At first glance, the process may seem intimidating. Managing the project budget, preparing reports on time, applying visibility rules, understanding the technical details of the grant agreement, and even coming across the term "European Court of Auditors" can be overwhelming for a newly formed team. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that these challenges are only temporary. Like any learning process, EU projects gradually become more understandable and manageable. Moreover, beneficiaries are not left alone in the process. The entire procedure is structured and learnable, with the support of implementation guides, financial management manuals, online training sessions, and assistance provided by the contracting authorities and lead partners. Additionally, most grant programmes include "beneficiary trainings" as part of their technical assistance component.

On the other hand, the process of preparing a project proposal is already a significant exercise in capacity building. If a proposal has been selected for funding, this means that the needs analysis, activity plan, risk management strategy, budget structure, and evaluation mechanisms presented in the application form have already been found to be well-structured and acceptable. At this stage, the project is no longer just an idea but an action plan ready for implementation. From that point forward, what needs to be done is to trust in the structured narrative that secured the funding and proceed step by step.

Many different institutions and organizations in candidate countries have successfully completed this process. A small district municipality receiving EU funds for the first time, women's cooperatives based in rural areas, or newly established civil society organizations... They have all experienced and completed the stages of project management, learning along the way. This is the simple proof that the system is not only accessible to universities in major cities, strong municipalities or nation-wide NGOs like some people think, it is easy and implementable to smaller-scale actors too.

All these examples demonstrate one simple truth: if one person or institution has done it, others can do it too. The key is to approach the process with an open mind, be willing to learn, and not hesitate to seek support when needed. EU projects are financial instruments and they are also opportunities for learning and growth. Institutions that implement projects don't just complete a set of tasks; they also gain experience in project management, financial management, risk management, communication, monitoring, reporting, and sustainability.

In short, the journey may seem difficult at first, but it becomes easier with each step.

Reference: European Commission. (2025). Managing your project under a grant agreement. Retrieved June 10, 2025 from https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/managing-your-project/managing-your-project-under-grant-agreement_en