



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
FOR MANAGING AUTHORITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN A PILOT ACTION ON
FRONTLOADING ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY BUILDING TO PREPARE FOR
THE POST-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD**

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- (1) Having the necessary administrative capacity in public administrations is a prerequisite for the effective and efficient implementation of public policies and for delivering high quality services to citizens and businesses.
- (2) The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) aim to support a balanced regional development across the EU with EUR 351.8 billion (2014-2020 period). Achieving this goal depends on more than funding – it requires skilled public servants working in efficient organisations capable of effectively managing complex projects within a multi-level governance context.
- (3) Changing circumstances including the evolution of EU cohesion policy over time necessitate a regular analysis and development of the administrative capacity of public administrations. Further, the growing complexities of public policies and the increasing expectations of citizens put pressure on public administrations to extend their know-how and acquire new sets of skills and competencies.
- (4) 'Shared management' is an effective and efficient method to deliver cohesion policy but needs to be underpinned by favourable framework conditions. Administrations managing the ESIF face internal challenges related to skills, competencies or organisational capabilities, as well as external challenges i.e. how they coordinate and interact with internal and external stakeholders. The following factors have been identified as crucial for having impact on their performance.
 - *Human resources*: Securing the timely availability of skilled and motivated staff is a key success factor in the management of public policies. Efficient Human Resource systems bring in and retain qualified people and support them to develop their skills.
 - *Structure*: A well-designed organisational structure is another key success factor for public institutions. Public sector organisations should operate in well-defined institutional and regulatory frameworks and have clear responsibilities and tasks. They need a clear, simple and transparent organisational structure that facilitates the efficient delivery of their tasks. Moreover, the structure should be flexible enough to react to changes.
 - *Systems and tools*: Public institutions need the right systems and tools to work in a transparent and efficient way. Procedures, guidelines, manuals and forms enhance the quality, transparency and resilience (e.g. when staff is leaving) of institutions. Information and communication technology systems are essential to facilitate internal and external communication. Information Management Systems increase the quality and transparency of decision-making. Performance management systems can help organisations to set goals and measure their progress towards them.
 - *Governance*: Good governance (legal, institutional, and procedural arrangements) is crucial for the success of public investment policies. Managing authorities can contribute to good governance by openly and transparently interacting and

coordinating with stakeholders involved in the implementation of operational programmes, such as national coordination bodies, relevant ministries, other ESIF administrations, beneficiaries, regional development agencies, civil society, NGOs etc.

- (5) The importance of adequate administrative capacity for cohesion policy is reflected in the legislative framework for the ESIF. Administrative capacity has to be covered in the Partnership Agreements, operational programmes and annual implementation reports and is addressed by several ex-ante conditionalities.
- (6) Member States have different tools at their disposal to strengthen the administrative capacity of national and regional administrations managing the ESIF assistance. This mainly includes technical assistance funding at the initiative of Member States, funding for thematic objective 11 'Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration' and actions and tools supported by technical assistance managed directly by the Commission.
- (7) Ideally, administrative capacity issues should be addressed by Member States already at the very beginning or even before the actual start of a new programming period. To facilitate the frontloading of support, technical assistance can be used to prepare for the next programming period. This should be complemented with capacity building actions running throughout the entire programming period.
- (8) DG Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) supports Member States in their efforts to strengthen their administrative capacity through a number of tools and concrete actions. Tools like TAIEX-REGIO PEER2PEER; Integrity Pacts; Guidance for practitioners on how to avoid public procurement errors; training seminars on issues like management and control, result orientation, state aid and public procurement; and the EU Competency Framework for managing and implementing the ERDF/Cohesion Fund are made available to Member State administrations.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL

- (9) Under this Call, DG REGIO seeks **expressions of interest from managing authorities of ERDF and Cohesion Fund programmes wishing to take advantage of expertise support to enhance further their administrative capacity** to be well prepared for the next programming period.
- (10) Work will be carried out in the framework of a pilot project. The experiences from the pilot project will be disseminated and feed into reflections on how to develop the administrative capacity of ESIF managing authorities for/in the post-2020 programming period. The focus is on identifying and implementing capacity building measures with the greatest potential benefit for cohesion policy.
- (11) The managing authorities participating in the pilot will receive support from the European Commission to strengthen further their administrative capacity. The European

Commission will cooperate with and use the expertise of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for implementing the pilot.

- (12) The pilot will be divided into two phases:
- **Phase I: preparation of a comprehensive roadmap** for administrative capacity building, and
 - **Phase II: implementation of selected actions** of the roadmap.
- (13) The key output of the **first phase** will be a comprehensive roadmap for administrative capacity building. The roadmap will include:
- a) relevant background information about the managing authority and the context in which it is operating;
 - b) identification of areas for further strengthening linked to the effective and efficient implementation of the programme;
 - c) identification of actions addressing the areas that need to be strengthened;
 - d) selection of actions to be implemented during Phase II of the pilot;
 - e) milestones, targets and deadlines for the actions; and
 - f) tools and responsible actors.
- (14) The actions described in the roadmap will be split in two categories, one set of actions to be implemented within Phase II of the pilot and another set of actions to be carried out independently by the concerned managing authority (i.e. outside the pilot project) in a longer term perspective. Actions to be implemented within Phase II of the pilot will be selected in agreement between the Commission and the managing authority.
- (15) The pilot will start with a kick-off meeting in Brussels in June 2018 (indicative timing). At the meeting the managing authorities will meet the team of OECD experts providing technical support during Phase I and present their organisational set-up and functioning and their expectations of the pilot.
- (16) The pilot will require the active participation of the managing authorities. They will need to delegate employees to participate in workshops and interviews and to contribute to/review documents. Further, they are expected to host a few workshops.
- (17) The managing authorities' costs associated with the pilot may be covered through technical assistance funding of the concerned operational programme.
- (18) The first phase will end with a meeting in Brussels with all pilot managing authorities and experts at which the roadmaps will be presented and the experiences shared. The concluding meeting is planned to take place in Brussels during the first quarter of 2019 (indicative timing). On the same occasion the kick-off meeting for the second phase of the pilot will take place.
- (19) The next step will be the implementation of the actions in the roadmap. The Commission will support the managing authorities in the implementation of the actions selected for

Phase II of the pilot. Managing authorities are encouraged to implement the other actions of the roadmap (those not selected for Phase II) on their own.

- (20) The European Commission will offer advice on implementation and provide support services for the actions selected for Phase II. It will contract experts and identify/provide tools for administrative capacity building.
- (21) Examples of EU tools supporting administrative capacity building that may be used for implementation of concrete actions in the roadmaps include:
- *The EU Competency Framework for the management and implementation of the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund* and its web-based self-assessment tool for 1) mapping of competency gaps, 2) developing a learning and development plan on how to fill the gaps and 3) reflection on task distribution and structure/organisation of the managing authority and its relationship with intermediate bodies.
 - The *TAIEX-REGIO PEER2PEER* exchange instrument.
 - *Networking opportunities* between pilot administrations, incl. joint training sessions
- (22) The European Commission has allocated a budget of EUR 900 000 (indicative amount) for the first phase of the pilot, i.e. development of roadmaps for the five selected pilot administrations. The budget for supporting the second phase will be defined at a later stage.
- (23) Interested managing authorities should in their expression of interest demonstrate their commitment and organisational readiness (e.g. appointment of a dedicated team) to develop and implement a roadmap for administrative capacity building with the aim of being better prepared for the post-2020 programming period.
- (24) The expected result of this Call is **a shortlist of five managing authorities** from those who submitted their expression of interest.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- (25) The comprehensive roadmaps for administrative capacity building should be completed in the first quarter of 2019.
- (26) Implementation of the selected actions (those included in the second phase of the pilot) will start in March 2019. The pilot managing authorities are encouraged to implement actions not included in the second phase on their own.
- (27) The European Commission will carry out an evaluation of the pilot by the end of 2019. The aim will be to synthesise the lessons learnt from the pilot and draw conclusions that can feed into development of guidance for managing authorities on how to address administrative capacity in preparation of and during the post-2020 programming period.

4. WHO CAN APPLY UNDER THIS CALL? ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

(28) The Call for expression of interest targets managing authorities for national or regional operational programmes co-financed by the ERDF and/or the Cohesion Fund.

(29) To be eligible, the expression of interest will have to meet all the following eligibility criteria:

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA		REFERENCE IN THE APPLICATION FORM
1.A	The managing authority has appointed a dedicated interlocutor to work with the European Commission on the pilot project. The managing authority is strongly motivated to strengthen further its administrative capacity and is committed to make necessary resources available for this goal. This includes a strong interest in self-assessment/evaluation and openness to peer expertise and working with internal and external stakeholders/expertise.	Section 2
1.B	The managing authority has informed the relevant national coordinating body/ministry (or equivalent) about the application.	Section 3
1.C	The managing authority has (pre)identified some specific areas for further strengthening linked to the effective and efficient implementation of the programme.	Sections 4 & 5

5. CRITERIA FOR SHORTLISTING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

(30) The eligible expressions of interest will be assessed against the following **assessment criteria**:

CRITERIA FOR SHORTLISTING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST		REFERENCE IN THE APPLICATION FORM
2.A	The level of motivation and commitment as demonstrated by the expression of interest.	Section 2
2.B	Description of the main area for strengthening linked to the effective and efficient implementation of the programme that the managing authority is facing, in particular in view of the next programming period	Section 4
2.C	Relevance – extent to which the managing authority is faced with or is interested in addressing areas for strengthening related to a) structure, b) Human Resources, c) systems and tools, d) governance (in particular coordination and interaction with internal and external stakeholders), or e) other issues.	Section 5

6. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

- (31) Expressions of interest will be checked against the eligibility criteria and assessed according to the selection criteria of this Call.
- (32) The Commission aims at a diverse shortlist in terms of Member State coverage and types of administrative capacity building needs as the experiences from the pilot will feed into reflections on how to further strengthen the administrative capacity for/in the post-2020 period.
- (33) The assessment will be carried out by a selection panel consisting of representatives of the European Commission. The final decision on the shortlist will be taken by the European Commission.
- (34) All applicants will be informed about the decision taken.
- (35) At this stage of the Call, the shortlisting of an expression of interest does not constitute a binding commitment – either implicit or explicit – on the part of the European Commission to provide support to a managing authority.

7. PROCEDURE FOR SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

- (36) Managing authorities expressing their interest to participate in the pilot on administrative capacity building should complete the application form provided in the Annex 1 of this Call.
- (37) The application form is to be completed in English, French or German.
- (38) The expression of interest should be submitted electronically to the following email address: REGIO-E1-ADMINISTRATIVE-CAPACITY@ec.europa.eu

8. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

- (39) The deadline for submitting an expression of interest is **Monday 9 April 2018**.
- (40) Expressions of interest submitted after the deadline of this Call will not be considered.

9. CONTACT

- (41) In case of any questions, please contact REGIO-E1-ADMINISTRATIVE-CAPACITY@ec.europa.eu

ANNEX 1: APPLICATION FORM

Call for expression of interest to participate in a pilot action on frontloading administrative capacity building to prepare for the post-2020 programming period

Please complete this form electronically and send it to:
REGIO-E1-ADMINISTRATIVE-CAPACITY@ec.europa.eu

1. Information about the applicant

1.1.	Name of managing authority		
1.2.	Name of operational programme		
1.3.	Contact person for this application	Name, surname	
		Job title	
		Phone (e.g. +32-00000000)	
		E-mail	
1.4.	Language portfolio/profile of the contact person and core team members	Language(s) used for daily work	
		Knowledge of other (foreign) languages	

2. Motivation and commitment

Please explain why your managing authority is interested in participating in the pilot and to what extent it would be able and willing to commit to the project and to its follow-up (e.g. implementation of actions of the roadmap that are outside the scope of Phase II of the pilot, sharing experience with other managing authorities). Please provide an indication of the resources that can be made available for the pilot.

Max. 500 words

3. Interaction with relevant national coordination body/ministry

Please indicate whether the relevant national coordination body/ministry (or equivalent) is informed about your application. What role do you envisage for the relevant national coordination body/ministry in the pilot project?

Max. 200 words

4. Main area for further strengthening linked to the effective and efficient implementation of the programme

Please provide a description of **the main** area for further strengthening linked to the effective and efficient implementation of the programme that your managing authority is facing and for which you would like to make use of external expertise.

Max 500 words

5. Relevant areas for strengthening administrative capacity

Please select those areas of administrative capacity building that you consider most relevant for your participation in the pilot project and where external expertise would be most useful (see paragraph 4 of the Call). Please give a short explanation why you would be interested in working on those areas. (N.B. no need to address all points below)

5.1. Human Resources YES

Max 200 words

5.2. Structure YES

Max 200 words

5.3. Systems and tools YES

Max 200 words

5.4. Governance, i.e. in particular with regard to coordination and interaction with internal and external stakeholders YES

Max 200 words

5.5. Other issues – please specify YES

Max 200 words