

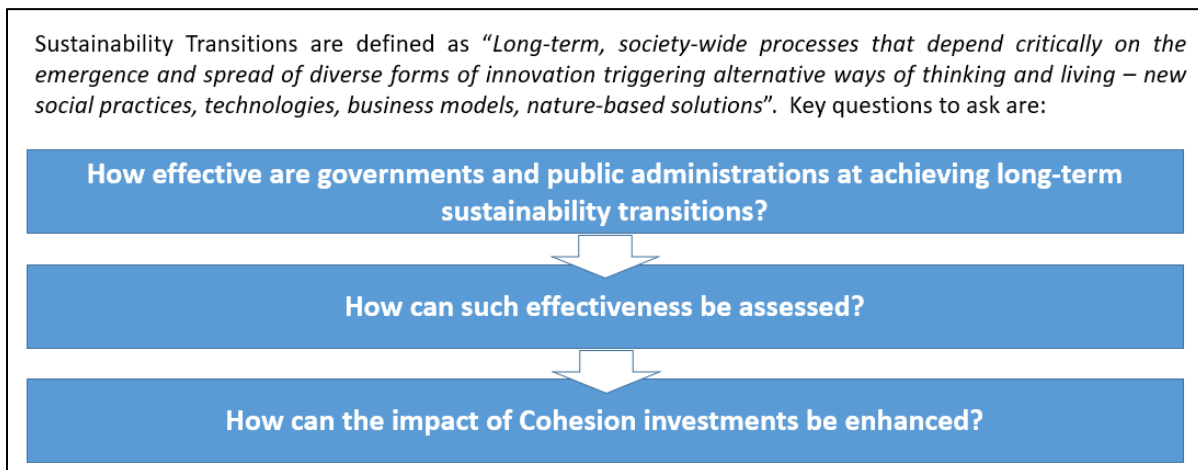


EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
FOR PUBLIC AUTHORITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PILOTING OF THE
SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (STAF)**

1. Background

Supporting the transition to sustainability features prominently within the Cohesion Policy for the period 2021-2027, and particularly within the second Policy Objective (PO2) on fostering a “Greener, Low Carbon Europe”. Enhancing the impact of Cohesion Policy investments will require improvements in EU Member States’ (MS) capacities to manage the shift to sustainability. In order to accompany national authorities in reflecting on their readiness to achieve long term sustainability goals, the Commission has requested the World Bank to develop and pilot a methodology that supports EU Member States and regions to design and implement “sustainability transitions”.



The World Bank developed a diagnostic framework for reviewing the capacity and effectiveness of Member States’ and regions’ governments systems’ at steering and supporting sustainability transitions. This diagnostic framework – termed Sustainability Transition Assessment Framework (STAF) - would comprehensively assess MS’ capacity to deliver on sectoral and cross-sectoral areas relevant to the EU Cohesion Policy Objective 2 by focusing on: (i) administrative structures and capacities, including coordination and strategy development for sustainability transitions; (ii) policy instruments for internalization, burden sharing, behavior change, innovation and deployment of new technologies; (iii) governance mechanisms necessary to engage relevant actors towards policy coherence and joined-up implementation; (iv) strategic communications capacity, as a critical ingredient of a successful transition aimed at building consensus among civil society actors and the public at large.

The analysis conducted through STAF will permit the identification and prioritization of a selected number of ‘pinch-points’ and related recommended actions, in both horizontal and thematic areas, which have the largest possibility to generate positive change in MS.

2. Objective, Purpose, and Scope

After the theoretical development of the STAF, the next Phase is the testing of the STAF in selected EU Member States. The piloting would allow to test the practicability of the STAF, identify areas for further improvement, and highlight areas of the STAF that work well. With the completion of the piloting phase, the overall development of the STAF will be concluded.

A key characteristic of the Sustainability Transition Assessment Framework is its horizontal and vertical dimensions. Horizontally, the framework will be designed to capture the cross-sectoral dimensions of sustainability transitions, while vertically, the framework will also allow assessing capacities at national and sub-national level, i.e. regional and municipal and city governments. The focus of the framework will be on assessing governmental capacity for sustainability, not on assessing “sustainability performance”. The exercise is intended to capture the quality of a country's policies and institutional arrangements, focusing on key elements that are within the government’s control (such as its air quality management system), rather than on sustainability outcomes (such as levels of air pollution). The STAF was developed for eleven sectors and six cross-cutting areas. Each of them can be assessed individually under the framework.

The Sustainability Transition Assessment Framework (STAF) - Basics		
<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess and contribute to the improvement of MS’ capacity to support sustainability transitions. To enhance the effectiveness of CP resources during the 2021-2027 cycle. To identify capacity gaps in the design and implementation of sustainability policies and investments. <p>Scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STAF assesses government capacity for transitions towards increased sustainability; it covers six cross cutting areas; and ten sectors related to the specific objectives of the second objective of the Cohesion Policy. 	<p>Sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy efficiency Renewable energies Smart energy systems Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience Water Circular economy Biodiversity Forestry Urban development Air quality Just transition 	<p>Cross-cutting areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax policy Public expenditure Distributional impact Land administration Strategic communication Behavioral insights

Key benefits of piloting STAF for a participating Member State:

- Comprehensive state-of-the-art assessment of Government capacity in up to eleven (11) sectors and six (6) cross-cutting areas.
- Obtain a holistic improvement plan for strengthening the Government’s capacity.
- Targeted institutional and technical advice delivered during piloting by STAF’s team of experts.
- Institutional and technical advice on leveraging the assessment results.
- An excellent starting point for continuous tracking and evaluating improvements in government capacity.
- Strengthened institutional and human capacity to conduct STAF again and/or to conduct other self-assessments.
- Results will be based on findings 'owned' by government stakeholders, thus increasing the likelihood they can lead to actions and actual change.

STAF – Operation of Questionnaires

STEP 1 - Organizing the assessment

- Installing a steering committee with representatives of the different sectors and areas.
- Agreeing on tasks and responsibilities.

STEP 2 - Communicating the assessment

STEP 3 - Assessment training

STEP 4 - Undertaking the assessment

- Selecting respondents.
- Backing the answers up with evidence.
- Suggesting areas for improvement.

STEP 5 - Reporting the results

STEP 6 - Developing improvement plans

- Review of the assessment results, identification of key capacity gaps and their drivers.
- Formulation and prioritization of improvement actions based on criteria (e.g. effectiveness, efficacy, resources, political feasibility, time-horizon, etc.)
- Formulation of an improvement plan.
- Monitoring, evaluation and review of the improvement plan.

The analysis will permit the identification and prioritization of a number of 'pinch-points' and related recommended actions, in both horizontal and thematic areas.

Against this background, this Call for Applications seeks to solicit interests from public authorities in EU Member States to participate in the piloting phase of the STAF.

For further information on the STAF and its use a technical report as well as guidelines are provided in the annex to this call.

3. Expected outcome

As a result of this pilot action, participating authorities will be provided recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of cohesion policy investments during the 2021-2027 programming period, and to identify capacity gaps in the design and implementation of their own policies and investments oriented towards sustainability transitions. The pilot action will also contribute to the finalization of the Sustainability Transition Assessment Framework.

4. Who can apply under this call (eligibility criteria)

The Call for expression of interest targets all public authorities involved in the programming and/or management of the 2021-2027 programmes co-financed by the ERDF and/or the Cohesion Fund (e.g. ministries, regional authorities, coordinating bodies, managing authorities, intermediate bodies).

Eligibility criteria		Reference in the application form
1	The public authority has appointed a dedicated interlocutor to work with the World Bank on the pilot project.	Section 1
2	The public authority is strongly motivated to enhance its capacity to support sustainability transitions and is committed to make necessary	Section 2

	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.	
3	The public authority has pre-identified areas (sector(s) and crosscutting area(s)) that would be subject to the assessment.	Section 3

5. Procedure for submission of expression of interest

Interested countries are invited to complete the application form provided in the Annex 1 of this Call.

The application form must be completed in English.

The expression of interest should be submitted electronically to the following email address: REGIO-G1-HEAD-OF-UNIT@ec.europa.eu.

6. Deadline for submission of expression of interest

The deadline for submitting expression of Interest is 20 June 2022.

Expressions of interest submitted after the deadline of this Call will not be considered.

7. Selection criteria

The eligible expressions of interest will be assessed against the following assessment criteria:

- The level of motivation and commitment to serve as a pilot country to STAF implementation
- Rank on the European Quality of Government Index, 2021; source: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/maps/quality_of_governance/
- Number of sectors and crosscutting areas envisaged for piloting STAF
- The nature of the country dialogue and / or operational portfolio with the World Bank Group, if any

8. Assessment process

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the eligibility criteria listed in section 4 and shortlisted based on the criteria listed in section 5 of this Call. The applications will be assessed jointly by a team composed of representatives of the European Commission, DG Regio, and the World Bank. Each applicant will be informed about the decision taken.

9. Contact

In case of any questions, please contact REGIO-G1-HEAD-OF-UNIT@ec.europa.eu.