



Brussels, 25.9.2023
C(2023) 6383 final

ANNEX 1

ANNEX

to the

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

amending Implementing Decision C(2023) 646 on the financing of the use of technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission in the framework of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund and the adoption of the annual work programme for 2023

ANNEX 1

Annex 1 to Implementing Decision C(2023) 646 is amended as follows:

1) Point **2. Grants** is amended as follows:

The introductory sentence is replaced by the following:

“The global budgetary envelope reserved for grants in 2023 is estimated at EUR 15 870 000 of which EUR 13 857 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05 02 02 00, EUR 600 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line REACT-EU 05.020502-NGEU and EUR 1 413 000 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05 03 02 00.”

Point **2.7. Support to energy cross-border communities** is deleted.

The following new points **2.7.** and **2.8.** are added:

“2.7. Better cohesion through development of energy communities in the Western Balkans

Type of applicants targeted by the direct award

The grant will be awarded to the Emilia-Romagna Region, which hosts the managing authority and the technical secretariat of the Interreg IPA ADRION Programme for 2021-2027. The ADRION cooperation area brings together 10 countries within the Adriatic-Ionian Region: 4 EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Slovenia and Italy), 5 EU candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) and a further third country (San Marino). In the Adriatic-Ionian region, the EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) is the trustful connection between the political and administrative bodies and the citizens who want to participate in building their own future.

The proposed pilot action aims to use an innovative holistic approach to deliver recommendations about how the European Union, national and local governments can support new clean energy communities to help them flourish in the Western Balkans and deliver their potential benefits for citizens. It should set an example of what is possible for the long-term benefit of all Western Balkan citizens and for making their cities more liveable places. It should inspire others (including legislators) to follow the 10 pilot actions that are proposed in this project and convince local authorities that their strongest assets in energy transition are their people (with the objective to increase mutual trust and work more together).

In this perspective, only a public regional body, both very close to citizens and having experience as the ‘ultimate implementer’ of national policies, has the necessary combination of know-how and citizen engagement in order to ensure the successful implementation of this action.

In order to make the renewable energy communities a reality in the Western Balkans, the countries must improve the regulatory framework for renewables self-consumption schemes. The legislative problems that can hinder the establishment of energy communities are related in the first instance to the failure to correctly transpose the European directives into the national law of the Member States. This can discourage the creation of energy communities, due to administrative obstacles, or by creating a situation whereby private companies take over these initiatives, despite an initial citizen-based approach.

According to the monitoring of REScoop.eu (the European federation of citizens’ energy cooperatives), Italy represents a good practice model for developing renewable energy communities. Moreover, due to its geographical location and territorial composition (large mountainous and inland areas and small municipalities), Emilia-Romagna has very similar

territorial aspects to the Western Balkans, and thanks to Emilia-Romagna's direct participation in numerous networks, boards and initiatives of European, macro-regional and transnational importance, Emilia-Romagna is considered the only regional body in the area with the capacity of supporting and accompanying the Western Balkan area towards ecological transition through the start-up and implementation of renewable energy communities.

A further challenge facing energy communities is to put the community and society back at the centre of the ecological transition. In this process, Emilia-Romagna has another unique advantage thanks to its consolidated cooperative tradition.

Therefore, Emilia-Romagna is considered the only body in the area with the necessary combination of *governance capability*, which is essential to cope with both the political and policy challenges of the proposed action, and *expertise and know-how*, both from the point of view of geographical and cooperation experience.

The grant will therefore be awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of point (f) of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation, i.e. awarded for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers, on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals.

Description of the activities

The action will rely on the EUSAIR partnership and multilevel governance, and be implemented through two main activities:

- Activity 1 – Creating the enabling conditions for a sample of 10 pilot energy communities in the 5 Western Balkan countries participating in the EUSAIR
- Activity 2 – Developing an integrated energy community network in the EUSAIR area

The expected outcome of these activities is the development of up to 10 replicable energy community projects (2 max per IPA beneficiary) that should operate within a “lighthouse project” network in the EUSAIR area, promoting the concept of replicable energy communities among citizens and policy makers at EUSAIR's regional and local levels, and facilitating related knowledge transfer, capacity-building and networking activities among EUSAIR partners.

Activity 2 will be coordinated with the regional projects managed by DG NEAR with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), namely *EU4 Energy Transition*, which has established the Covenant of Mayors for climate and energy, and *EU4 Green*.

The action aims not only at fighting against energy poverty and achieving a just, low carbon energy transition for the Western Balkans, but is also a social experiment to activate young people, to empower local communities to self-govern and to foster energy democracy, holding the promise of an economy and society based on cooperation rather than competition.

Implementation

This action will be implemented directly by DG REGIO

2.8. Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) top-up

Type of applicants targeted by the direct award

The grant will be awarded to Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

The grant will be awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of point (f) of Article 195 of the Financial Regulation, i.e. awarded for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers, on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals.

The AEBR is a registered association with the exclusive and direct purpose to promote cross-border cooperation in Europe. AEBR is a civil society body capable of conducting and promoting projects in the intended shape and scope. Its members are European border and cross-border regions in Member States of the European Union or the Council of Europe. Since its creation in the early 1970s, AEBR has been establishing and refining a general network of border and cross-border regions, which is not limited to the members of AEBR or the European Union with significant expertise and experience.

The AEBR Secretariat's reputation, knowledge, quality control and administrative capacity to coordinate and manage cross-border cooperation pilot projects coupled with the cross-border specific knowledge can ensure successful implementation of this project.

The actions proposed by this project offer the possibility to young Europeans aged 18-30 to serve as volunteers in Interreg programmes and projects. Their specific characteristics require the expertise of AEBR, in particular on account of its reputation, independence, accountability, technical competence, its high degree of specialisation and its administrative capacity. Thus, AEBR is the only civil society body capable of conducting the actions of the project in the intended shape and scope.

Description of the activities

Interreg volunteer youth is an initiative that allows for young people to be volunteers in Interreg projects and programme authorities, to promote concrete achievements of Interreg programmes and projects to the general public and stakeholders via modern communication channels. It was launched in 2017, at the time part of the broader European Solidarity Corps Initiative launched by the European Commission

Since then, the initiative has become a stand-alone initiative for Interreg, and it has grown to include more countries. Now, it covers EU Member States, EFTA countries, neighborhood and accession countries. One of the aims of this grant is to support the inclusion of partner countries of outermost regions.

There is a need for a continuing support to the initiative because of the following reasons:

- Extra communication activities. Due to the separation from the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), the initiative needs to develop a new webpage, including a portal for the volunteers to sign up. This increased the communication costs.
- The inclusion of partner countries of outermost regions requires additional personnel to support the work on these partner countries.
- Increase of rates of pocket money etc. for volunteers, by adapting to the ESC 2023 rates.

Implementation

This action will be implemented directly by DG REGIO

”

2) Point **3. Prizes** is amended as follows:

The introductory sentence is replaced by the following:

“The global budgetary envelope reserved for contests in 2023 is estimated at EUR 875 000 of which EUR 375 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05 02 02 00 and EUR 500 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line REACT-EU 05.020502-NGEU.”

In point **3.1. Prizes to support the New European Bauhaus**, the table “Description” is replaced by the following:

“Description

The New European Bauhaus is an initiative launched by President von der Leyen in her address on the State of the Union on 16 September 2020. The initiative has the ambition to make the Green Deal a cultural, human-centred and positive, tangible experience and accelerate a sustainable greening of the built environment. More specifically, its objective is to articulate, in an innovative way, three key dimensions:

- sustainability (including circularity),
- aesthetics (and other dimensions of the quality of experience beyond functionality),
- inclusion (including accessibility and affordability).

The 2023 and 2024 prizes will bring together those excellent examples and new ideas that could inspire the project and contribute to the shaping of the concept.

The prizes will recognise and celebrate existing achievements and support the younger generation to further develop emerging concepts and ideas. They will give visibility to examples and concepts that illustrate how the triangle of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion has already been translated in our territories, our communities and in our practices, or that pave the way to the future in our universities or in young professionals’ portfolios.

”

3) Point **4. Procurement** is amended as follows:

The introductory sentence is replaced by the following:

“The global budgetary envelope reserved for procurement contracts in 2023 is estimated at EUR 61 598 002.78 of which EUR 30 318 532.34 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05.020200, EUR 24 561 022.44 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line REACT-EU 05.020502-NGEU and EUR 6 718 448 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05.030200.”

In point **4.1. Service contracts**, the table “Implementation” is replaced by the following:

“ Implementation

Part of the procurement budget will be co-delegated via co-delegations Type II, according to Commission Decision C(2022) 9304 final of 15 December 2022 on the internal rules for the implementation of the Commission section of the general budget of the European Union, as follows:

- *Audit*

To DG EMPL to contribute to the ARACHNE project that is developing, testing and implementing a risk scoring tool.

- *Communication and Publications*

To the Publications Office for publications and printing services;

To DG COMM for contributions to the Corporate Communication and for the transfer to the EC Representations for promotion of cohesion policy projects;

To DG CNECT as a contribution to the Kohesio project.

- *IT*

To DIGIT for corporate IT services, for some services not covered by corporate baseline services and for the development of the Corporate ARACHNE project (risk scoring tool);

To DG BUDG for ABAC DBD links;

To DG EMPL for IT audit tool MAPAR.

- *Statistics and Data Collection*

To DG ESTAT for Data acquisitions and GIS support;

To DG COMM for the Eurobarometer on Cohesion Policy.

- *Technical and other administrative assistance to Member States*

To DG AGRI for running the Brussels based Facility for Broadband Competence Offices;

To DG ENER for participation in the Energy Community Repository (ECR) and Rural Energy Community Advisory Hub (RECAH).

To DG NEAR for contributing to the TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer project.

- *Translations*

To DGT.

The rest of the procurement budget will be implemented directly by DG REGIO.

”

4) Point **5. Actions implemented in indirect management** is amended as follows:

The introductory sentence is replaced by the following:

“The global budgetary envelope reserved for actions to be implemented under indirect management in 2023 is estimated at EUR 71 170 000 of which EUR 55 777 933.66 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05.020200, EUR 8 271 566.34 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line REACT-EU 05.020502-NGEU and EUR 7 120 500 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05.030200.”

In point **5.1. Cooperation with the World Bank**, the table “Description” is replaced by the following:

“ Description

- Catching-up region initiative (CuRI) in Slovakia

This action identifies constraints to growth in the three least developed regions of the country and provides hands-on technical assistance for unlocking their development potential. It provides a tailor-made support for the investments related to Cohesion Policy funds.

- Poverty mapping

This action will produce poverty maps for the 11 Member States, with the objective to identify areas with a high concentration of poverty and how this has changed over time.

- Subnational business enabling environment

This action will assess the quality of the business environment in EU regions. It will aim to produce quantitative indicators of the business of environment at the regional or urban level to create a better understanding of how to improve business environment in the concerned regions.

- Integrated approach to social inclusion

The action aims to develop an integrated approach to social inclusion that would lead to quality investments in the area. It is expected to lead to a hands-on support to a set of Member States, as part of piloting, to design, align and implement the delivery frameworks for social inclusion and the funding so as to create an enabling environment for effective and sustainable investments for social inclusion.

”

In point **5.2. Cooperation with the OECD**, the table “Description” is replaced by the following:

“Description

- Regional input/output tables

This action will develop and test the methodology to create regional input output tables. These tables will be used for DG REGIO’s analysis and economic model RHOMOLO. Better methods and data would help to improve our analysis and modelling work.

- Functional areas

This action will generate data and analysis on functional areas in OECD member countries in and outside the EU to follow-up on the long-term vision for rural areas, including a focus on demographic change.

- Pilot action: Support to beneficiaries in cooperation with Managing Authorities

A pilot action on support to beneficiaries to be carried out in to be selected number of MS with the aim to identify capacity gaps of beneficiaries and their knowledge needs. In collaboration with the managing authorities actions and support tools to address identified challenges will be developed.

- Transatlantic cooperation on industrial regions in transition

Many countries in Europe and in the USA and Canada have experienced or are experiencing a decline of some of their industrial regions. Low economic opportunities, deprived environment and quality of life feed a growing discontent among citizens and put pressure on democracies.

To help support policy development and implementation, this action will work on different workstreams: academic work, exchange of knowledge and experience bringing together regional, state and local actors, facilitate a transatlantic political dialogue. It will cover the organisation of and participation to conferences and study visits, publication of reports, etc.

- Innovative implementation of partnership principle – phase II

This action will build on previous pilots and will continue to promote a truly participatory process in Member States and regions and meaningful implementation of the partnership principle. Support will be provided to more new innovative initiatives bringing local actors, communities, civil society and citizens together and strengthening their role in the implementation of the investments supported under the cohesion policy.

- Strategic public procurement in cohesion policy - Support to Managing Authorities

This action will provide practical support to Managing Authorities in their efforts to take up and scale up strategic procurement in future projects. It will build on the experience and disseminate learnings of previous pilot projects to support the implementation of strategic procurement in selected projects under cohesion policy and disseminate their learnings, and bring closer to the Managing Authorities the tools and objectives of the Commission in terms or strategic procurement.

- Smart adaptation of regions to demographic transition

This action aims at helping regions facing demographic decline and emigration of their younger cohort of population (at risk of a talent development trap) to adapt to demographic transition and talent development through tailored place-based policies focusing on necessary investments and reforms. The action will target up to 10 regions with the provision of analyses and recommendations, across key policy sectors on how to respond to (rapid) population reductions. It will deliver reports and tailored recommendations for national and regional policies that cohesion policy can help implement or address via investments and reforms.

- Compendium on What Works for Inclusive Growth in Cities

The action is in line with the Commission priority of “An economy that works for people”, as well as with specific objective 3.4 of the REGIO Strategic Plan 2020-2024 by helping to steer investments to address demographic change and social and territorial inequalities and to enhance quality of life. The Compendium will support the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

- Unlocking the potential of intermediary cities for regional development

The action will support research on how to unlock the potential of medium-sized cities and the surrounding areas that depend on them. While intermediary cities offer a less congested, more liveable (e.g., less polluted) and more affordable alternative to larger cities as well as act as regional hubs for economic, social, and cultural activities, they face a series of challenges to their development.

- Support to designing of regional recovery strategies - PHASE 2

The action extends the work started in this domain in 2021. It will contribute to the reflection on the need to attract and retain investments allowing the EU to reinforce its autonomy in key sectors. The approach is very concrete, embedded in the territories and in support of decision makers. It is based on new data (at a smaller scale), but also on the analysis of regional development strategies and their governance. It can help to strengthen the capacity of sub-national actors and inform the mid-term evaluation of the programmes.

- Smart Enabling Regulations for the Green Transition at national and sub-national levels

The action is to help national and sub-national governments in the EU to design and update regulations and standards that can create the conditions for new clean technologies to enter markets and be commercially successful across regions in the EU.

- Cooperation with the OECD Network on Fiscal Relations across Levels of Government

The action will help to gather valuable data and information in preparation for the post-2027 EU funding instruments, in particular Cohesion Policy funds, as well in relation to reforms and the European Semester process.

”

Point **5.6. Cooperation with an international organisation** is deleted.

A new point **5.6. Cooperation with the UNICEF** is added as follows:

“ **5.6. Cooperation with the UNICEF**

Implementing entity

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (‘UNICEF’) is an agency of the United Nations, which is responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. The agency is among the most widespread and recognisable social welfare

organisations in the world, with a presence in 192 countries and territories. UNICEF's activities include providing immunisations and disease prevention, administering treatment for children and mothers with HIV, enhancing childhood and maternal nutrition, improving sanitation, promoting education, and providing emergency relief in response to disasters.

Description

- Deinstitutionalisation of Ukrainian children

The action is addressing the needs of the children fleeing Ukraine and currently residing in the Ossa Hotel in Poland, in line with the deinstitutionalisation requirements (following the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNCRPD) and including their relocation needs, accommodation in smaller groups facilities, care services and socio-psychological services needed for the purpose.

The action will be implemented by DG EMPL via a co-delegation Type II, according to Commission Decision C(2022) 9304 final of 15 December 2022 on the internal rules for the implementation of the Commission section of the general budget of the European Union.

”

5) Point **9. Other actions or expenditure** is amended as follows:

In point **9.1. Experts contracts – AMI list**, the table “Amount” is replaced by the following:

“Amount

The amount in 2023 is estimated at EUR 1 777 000 of which EUR 963 450 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line 05.020200; EUR 576 000 will be supported from ERDF operational budget line REACT-EU 05.020502-NGEU and EUR 237 550 will be supported from Cohesion Fund operational budget line 05.030200.

”