European Commission

Handbook on the lump sum funding model

Key Action 2 – Partnerships for Cooperation – Call 2026

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1. Introduction

This handbook aims to offer methodological guidance on how to interpret and correctly follow the rules on lump sum grants awarded for Cooperation Partnerships, Small-scale Partnerships and European Partnerships for School Development, as described in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide[1]. It provides indications covering the entire project life cycle, from the preparation and presentation of the application to the management of the project, reporting and controls.

This handbook is applicable only to actions under 'Erasmus+ Key Action 2 – Partnerships for Cooperation' funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme[2] and managed by National Agencies (indirect management actions).

Should there be inconsistencies between the information provided in this document and the provisions of the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, the latter would prevail.

In lump sum grants, the grant amount is fixed and will be paid out if the project is implemented as set out in the grant agreement.

These types of grants are simpler to implement than actual cost grants since they require less administration and no cost reporting. They are based on the Decision authorising the use of lump sums and unit costs under the Erasmus+ Programme 2021 – 2027[3].

The handbook annexes provide additional methodological guidance to support the design of a project:

- Annex 1 provides general guidelines on project management to help applicants prepare a successful grant application.
- Annex 2 shows how to design indicators and provides examples from former strategic partnerships funded in the 2014-2020 programming period.
- Annex 3 provides recommendations on the drafting of a partnership agreement.

2. Partnerships for Cooperation

Partnerships for Cooperation supported under Erasmus+ allow organisations and institutions to increase the quality and relevance of their activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport.

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[1] https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide

[2] Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013, *OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, pp. 1–33* ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/817/oj

[3]https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/erasmus/guidance/ls-and-unit-cost-decision_erasmus_en.pdf

This section summarises the information contained in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide regarding the objectives, structure, criteria and funding rules applying to Partnerships for Cooperation.

2.1. Objectives

Cooperation partnerships aim to:

- **Increasing quality in the work, activities and practices of organisations and institutions involved,** opening up to new actors, not naturally included within one sector;
- **Building capacity of organisations** to work transnationally and across sectors;
- **Addressing common needs and priorities** in the fields of education, training, youth and sport;
- **Enabling transformation and change** (at individual, organisational or sectoral level), leading to improvements and new approaches, in proportion to the context of each organisation.

In addition to the above, Small-scale Partnerships aim also to:

- **Attract and widen access for newcomers, less experienced organisations and small-scale actors to the programme.** These partnerships should act as a first step for organisations into cooperation at European level.
- **Support the inclusion of target groups with fewer opportunities.**
- **Support active European citizenship and bring the European dimension to the local level.**

Finally, European Partnerships for School Development aim to:

- **Improve the quality of learning and teaching** at schools through European cooperation;
- **Strengthen the institutional capacity and structures** needed to extend learning mobility opportunities in school education, in particular by creating synergies with the opportunities offered under Erasmus+ Key Action 1;
- Trigger **innovation in school education practices, procedures and policies** by applying results and best practices from successful transnational projects, expanding their impact beyond the project partner organisations.

2.2. Structure

A **Partnership for Cooperation project** typically consists of four stages, some of which start before the project proposal is selected for funding[4]: planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up. Participating organisations and participants involved in the activities should take an active role in all those stages and thus enhancing their learning experience.

Planning and preparing a project

The design and planning of a project aim to define the needs, objectives, project learning outcomes, activity formats, schedule, financial needs, etc.

It is necessary to carefully read the Programme Guide rules and the application form before starting the design and planning of the project. Having the award criteria and the application form questions as a reference from the start will guide you through the drafting process.

It is important to establish a clear project structure and to make sure that the links between priorities, needs, objectives and results are well described. Setting clearly defined target groups will help you to assess the needs and define the objectives and results.

All partners should be involved from the beginning of the process. This helps to draft a comprehensive and coherent proposal. It is recommended to start drafting a partnership agreement already at this stage (see Annex 3).

The more detail applicants provide for the activities, the easier it will be to define the financial needs and to estimate the required lump sum. Agreeing on a general plan (number and format of activities, expected results and overall schedule) makes it possible to deduce the financial needs and estimate the total budget of the project.

Annex 1 of this document includes more guidance on how to conduct a needs analysis and define realistic and measurable project objectives.

Once the general structure of the project has been agreed, partners should then move on to preparing a more detailed plan of activities and practical arrangements.

Having a clear work programme, including a project timeline, and clear distribution of tasks and budget between project partners, based on their different experiences and expertise, will facilitate the coordination of the project.

During the preparation phase, it is important to reflect on the potential risks and the possible measures to mitigate them. A good monitoring mechanism is paramount to prevent risks.

[4] Please note that any activities implemented before the start date of the project are not considered as eligible for EU funding.

Project implementation and follow-up

The project activities must be implemented according to the project proposal. Changes are allowed, however any changes in the planned activities or results must be well documented, justified, and relevant for the overall project goals.

The beneficiaries should make sure that the activities are designed, prepared and implemented in an accessible, inclusive and eco-friendly way making use of relevant digital tools.

Throughout the implementation of the project, the beneficiaries should monitor on a regular basis the quality and impact of the activities, verify if the work plan is respected and anticipate possible changes.

Before the end of the project, the beneficiaries have to evaluate the project outcomes and their impact at different levels. At the level of the participating organisations, the impact depends largely on the integration of the project results in the regular work of the organisations. At a wider level, it depends on transferability of the results to other target groups, organisations, sectors, countries, etc.

Sustainability of the project and wide and targeted dissemination of results by all project partners is also a key factor of success.

3. The funding model

3.1. Overview

The funding rules of Partnerships for Cooperation in Erasmus+ 2021-2027 have been simplified compared to similar actions supported under Erasmus+ during the period 2014-2020. These rules are based on the EU Financial Regulation[5] and the following principles:

- The lump sums are pre-defined by the call, covering all costs of eligible activities linked to the implementation of the project.

- The Erasmus+ Programme Guide sets different types of pre-defined lump sums (see section 3.2) to cover different types of partnerships with different levels of complexity in terms of administrative and reporting requirements.
- The lump sums must be eligible according to the grant agreement.

- When planning a project, the applicant organisation and their project partners will need to choose the most appropriate pre-defined amount to cover the costs of their project, based on their needs, objectives and results. Their choice needs to match the ambitions and expected outcomes of the project. This does not apply for the

[5] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast), OJ L, 2024/250, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj

European Partnerships for School Development, where the project lump sum is pre-defined.

- Proposals must describe the activities that the applicants commit to carry out. Those activities comply with the eligibility criteria set in the Programme Guide and must be relevant for the objectives of KA2. The number and scale of the described activities must justify the chosen single lump sum.

- Regarding budget details, the applicants should indicate the amount allocated to each activity, as well as to the work packages “project management” (for Cooperation Partnerships and European Partnerships for School Development) and “plan for long-term impact” (only for European Partnerships for School Development). Grants allocated to each activity must satisfy the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness in relation to the objectives of KA2. The total budget in the application must equal the pre-defined lump sum.

- The lump sum amounts are pre-defined. If the assessment of the proposal shows that its cost-effectiveness is not adequate, there is no possibility to "downgrade" or “upgrade” the proposal to a lower or higher lump sum amount. It means that such a proposal will simply not be selected.

- The lump sum amount chosen at proposal stage cannot be modified during the project implementation phase. It becomes a fundamental characteristic of the project.

- At the end of the selection process, the granting authority (National Agency) will select the projects per type of partnerships. The selection process for Small-scale Partnerships, Cooperation Partnerships and European Partnerships for School Development are independent and result in separate ranking lists.

- After the project is implemented, the final payment of the lump sum will take into account:
    - Eligibility of the activities/work packages (see section 3.4)
    - Implementation completeness, quality and timeliness (see section 4.3 and 5.3)
    - Proper performance of all obligations under the grant agreement (see section 4.3 and 5.3)

- It is important to note that at the final report stage, ineligibility of activities/work packages will lead to rejection of the claimed amounts, while poor, partial or late implementation will lead to a grant reduction.

3.2. Lump sum amounts

The table below shows the different pre-defined amounts as set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

Action	Pre-defined lump sum per type of project
Small-scale Partnerships	30.000 EUR
	60.000 EUR
Cooperation Partnerships	120.000 EUR
	250.000 EUR
	400.000 EUR
European Partnerships for School Development	400.000 EUR

3.3. Co-financing and no-profit principle

All grants funded by the European Union budget in the context of this action will comply with the principle of **co-financing**. This means that the resources necessary to carry out the action are not provided entirely by the grant.

However, the applicant is not required to demonstrate the amount of co-financing with a detailed project budget. Rather, the compliance with this principle will be assessed based on the information provided in the description of the activities. The evaluators must be convinced that the value of the planned activities is higher than the pre-defined EU lump sum.

According to the Programme Guide, the verification of the no-profit principle does not apply to projects financed with lump sum grants because the lump sum is determined at application stage and its appropriateness cannot be challenged by later controls. During reporting and checks, the grant amounts can be questioned only on the basis of delivery and quality of agreed project results.

This methodology of budget approval already ensures the no-profit principle is respected, without the need to verify it again. Therefore, if the project is fully implemented but has funds remaining after project end, the beneficiary will not be required to return the unspent funds (they will not be considered as profit) as long as all the approved work packages are completed, and the results are achieved.

3.4. Activities covered by the lump sum

The pre-defined lump sum will be used to cover costs related to the implementation of eligible activities within the scope of Partnerships for Cooperation (Small-scale Partnerships, Cooperation Partnerships and European Partnerships for School Development), such as, for example:

- project management (planning, finances, coordination and communication between partners, monitoring and supervision, etc.)
- learning activities
- teaching and training activities
- meetings and events
- project deliverables (publications, materials, documents, tools, products, etc.)
- activities aimed at maximising the impact of project results
- activities aimed at sharing project results.

Typical costs linked to project activities can include travel and subsistence, equipment, costs for publication and editing of materials, IT development (such as creating a website), staff and human resources costs, etc.

Please note that any activity can be accepted when considered relevant for the project and compliant with the eligibility criteria. If an application presents activities that are deemed not relevant to achieving the objectives of the programme or are disproportionate in terms of costs, the project might be scored low during the selection phase or rejected.

During the project implementation, it is important to ensure that the budgeted activities and work packages are implemented as proposed and approved, so that they are eligible for a full grant. If they are not the same as identified in the project or if they are not equivalent in terms of content and budget, they will be rejected as ineligible, and the corresponding budgeted amount will not be paid for them.

3.5. Budget management and grant agreements amendments

Once a grant is awarded, beneficiaries have flexibility in the management of the lump sum as long as the activities are implemented as foreseen in the proposal and the expected results remain the same. If the beneficiaries would like to formalise a change in the breakdown of the lump sum shares, this will require an amendment.

However, if the beneficiary has to implement significant content changes in the project, they need to request an amendment of the grant agreement. Depending on the changes, a modification of the budget allocation may be needed. The National Agency will assess the amendment request and, if approved, it will become part of the grant agreement.

The changes requested cannot call into question the grant award decision or otherwise breach the principle of equal treatment of applicants.

In what concerns the planned activities, changes through an amendment are possible on the condition that the changed activities are content equivalent, meaning that the new/modified activity contributes to the project objectives and results, and budget equivalent, meaning that the modified activity has a comparable cost to the one originally planned. However, as specific cases can be very different from each other, it is recommended to always consult the National Agency to prevent them being rejected as ineligible.

The beneficiary can introduce changes to work packages/activities only if the work package/activity is not already completed.

At reporting stage, the amount reported for each activity or work package will be the same as what was allocated at application or amendment stage. Grant reductions will depend only on the level of achievement of the objectives of the work package/activities and the quality of the results.

4. Small-scale Partnerships

4.1. Application

Small-scale Partnerships are designed for inclusion and access of newcomers to the programme. That is why the structure of the application form is simpler than the one for Cooperation Partnerships and the level of information required is lower, while ensuring compliance with EU Financial Regulation rules.
All project proposals should contribute to one or more of the programme's policy priorities. Applicants are asked to select at least one horizontal priority of the Programme and/or at least one specific priority relevant to the field of education, training, youth and sport that is mostly impacted.

The project description in the application should in simple terms explain the objectives of the project and the expected results, linking them to the selected priorities. In order to come up with relevant project objectives, the applicant should identify and explain the needs of their partner organisations and of their target group(s). Annex I of this document includes further information on how to conduct a needs analysis.

Applicants should keep in mind that the main element of these projects is their transnational nature. Therefore, the application must present the benefits of cooperating with partners from other countries and how this helps to achieve the project objectives. All participating organisations have to be included in the application form, as well as information about the cooperation arrangements in the partnership. In order to ensure sound management of the project, it is important to establish a clear division of tasks and responsibilities between the partners. Annex III provides more advice about internal partnership arrangements.

The applicant will have to choose one of the two project lump sums**.** A detailed budget is not requested in the application form. However, it is helpful to support the design of the proposal with an accurate cost estimate. This will allow applicants to choose the most appropriate lump sum to achieve their objectives.

Altogether, the project proposal should be coherent and should make clear links between the objectives, the proposed activities and the expected results.

Example:

Objective: transfer best practices in teaching languages among different countries.

Activity: workshop for the exchange of good practices among teachers.

Expected result: upon return to their school, language teachers implement new practices in their classrooms.

In the application form, applicants are asked to provide information about each **planned activity** as a whole (e.g. the content of the activity, its venue, duration, estimated number of participants, etc.), to define the activity's lead organisation and to list other participating organisations. The lead organisation is typically the one organising the activity. Other participating organisations are other project partners who will also take part in the particular activity. The estimated activity start and end dates can be changed during implementation without an amendment.

The description of activities must clearly describe their intended results and the link with project objectives. In the same way, the description of **expected results** must show logical correlation with the objectives. Expected results correspond to the achievement of project objectives.

Applicants will have to assign a total EUR amount to each activity and explain how it has been defined. This means that no detailed budget is required (e.g. no need to indicate the exact number of participants in an activity or the actual costs estimated for meals per participant). However, sufficient information should be provided so that evaluators can assess the appropriateness of each activity against the objectives of the action and the requested amount, as well as the coherence of one activity with the others. For example, if the activity involves organising a meeting, the description should include key details such as the approximate number of participants, the type of venue, etc.

In the **impact and follow-up** section of the application form, applicants must provide information about the tools and methods that will be used to evaluate the achievement of the objectives, the communication strategy for sharing the projects results and the measures

to be taken after the end of the project to ensure the sustainability of the activities and results.

The **budget summary** of the application form is completed automatically. It consists of a table with the list of activities and the estimated cost allocated to each one. The total sum is equal to the requested project lump sum (30.000 EUR or 60.000 EUR).

4.2. Reporting

The final report requires beneficiaries to show the consistency of project outcomes and results with the proposal presented at application stage. The final report presents a similar structure to the application form and must explain how the action was implemented, and that the results reached on completion of the project are in line with the initial award criteria: Relevance, Quality of the project design and implementation, Quality of the partnership and cooperation arrangements and Impact. However, considering that reporting takes place at the end of the project implementation, the perspective in the analysis of the criteria changes accordingly:

- **Relevance:** How the project addressed the objectives and priorities of the action effectively and how it built capacity of organisations to engage in transnational cooperation bringing added value at both national and EU level.
- **Quality of the project implementation** refers to the quality of results achieved through the project activities that were carried out.
- **Quality of the partnership** refers to the quality of the cooperation among partners during the implementation of the project. This takes into account the respect of the project timeline and the overall management of the project.
- **Impact** refers to the integration of project results in the work of the participating organisations, the resulting changes in behaviours, and their transferability to other target groups, organisations, sectors, countries, etc.

To assess the quality of the project, for each of the above, beneficiaries are requested to provide a description of how the criteria were fulfilled. The final report template in the Beneficiary Module provides guiding questions for this purpose. It includes questions related to the concrete outcomes and achievements of the project, the activities carried out, the implemented monitoring and assessment methods, the cooperation arrangements put in place and the dissemination of the project results but also its sustainability.

In addition, beneficiaries are invited to carry out a lesson learnt exercise and reflect on the quality of the implementation of their project, the successes and the problems encountered.

As part of the final report, beneficiaries will have to make their project results available on the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (by uploading them via the Beneficiary Module) as proof that the project has been implemented, and to demonstrate the quality of its results. In addition, beneficiaries can add other documents and materials that they consider relevant

for the project evaluation. In that case, beneficiaries need to reference the attached documents in the report, as part of the description of project results. If those documents are not considered sufficient for the quality assessment, the assessors can request additional documents related to the declared project results. If those documents are not considered sufficient for the quality assessment, the assessors can request specific documents related to the declared project results.

Proof of incurred expenses is not required at final report stage. However, the beneficiary has to keep all relevant documentation to demonstrate that the activities for which the grant was awarded have actually been carried out, in case it is required by the National Agency when conducting a check during project implementation or after the completion of the project. See more information about checks, reviews, monitoring and audits in section 6 of this document.

4.3. Quality assessment of the final report

The National Agency will perform a quality assessment of the implemented activities, and the achieved results based on the final report submitted by the beneficiary.

Based on the final report, the National Agency attributes an overall score to the project, calculated as the sum of the individual scores attributed to each of the criteria: relevance, quality of the partnership, quality of the project implementation, and impact.

Criterion	**Quality assessment score**
Relevance (maximum score 20 points)	
Quality of the partnership (maximum score 20 points)	
Quality of the project implementation (maximum score 30 points)	
Impact (Maximum score 30 points)	
Final score	

If the project score is below the threshold for poor, partial or late implementation defined in the grant agreement, the National Agency may apply a grant reduction which will be calculated on the total amount of the grant according to the following scale:

Project score	**% Grant Paid**
60 – 100	100%
45 – 59	90%
30 – 44	70%
10 – 29	30%

0 – 9	0%

If it is not possible to complete an activity by the end of the project, the beneficiary has to justify the situation in the final report.

In exceptional cases where a project activity cannot be carried out and it is not replaced by another equivalent activity in terms of both its contribution to the objectives and its budget, the NA shall reduce the grant by rejecting the amount allocated to that activity in the project proposal.

The grant can also be reduced if the beneficiary commits substantial errors, irregularities or fraud or serious breach of other obligations, such as, for example, the submission of false information, failure to provide required information, or the obligation to ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).

5. Cooperation Partnerships

5.1. Application

All project proposals should contribute to one or more of the **programme's policy priorities**. Applicants are asked to select at least one horizontal priority of the Programme and/or at least one specific priority relevant to the field of education, training, youth and sport that is primarily addressed.

The **project description** in the application should explain the objectives of the project, the expected results and their link with the selected priorities. In order to come up with relevant project objectives the applicants must identify and explain the needs of their partner organisations and of their target groups. Annex I of this document includes further information on how to conduct a needs analysis.

In Cooperation Partnerships, each project shall include a standard work package for project management and additional work packages for project implementation. The application form already makes a distinction between the work package dedicated to project management and other work packages for implementation of the project activities. The budget allocation for all work packages must be indicated in the application form.

The description of the **project management** work package (WP1) must include a project management methodology, a detailed timeline with milestones, the monitoring and control system and the measures put in place to ensure a timely implementation of the project activities. Supporting documents to further detail these requirements may be attached to the proposal.

The project management work package can represent a maximum of 20% of the total budget. It does not require the indication of specific objectives, since it is considered to contribute horizontally to all the objectives of the project.

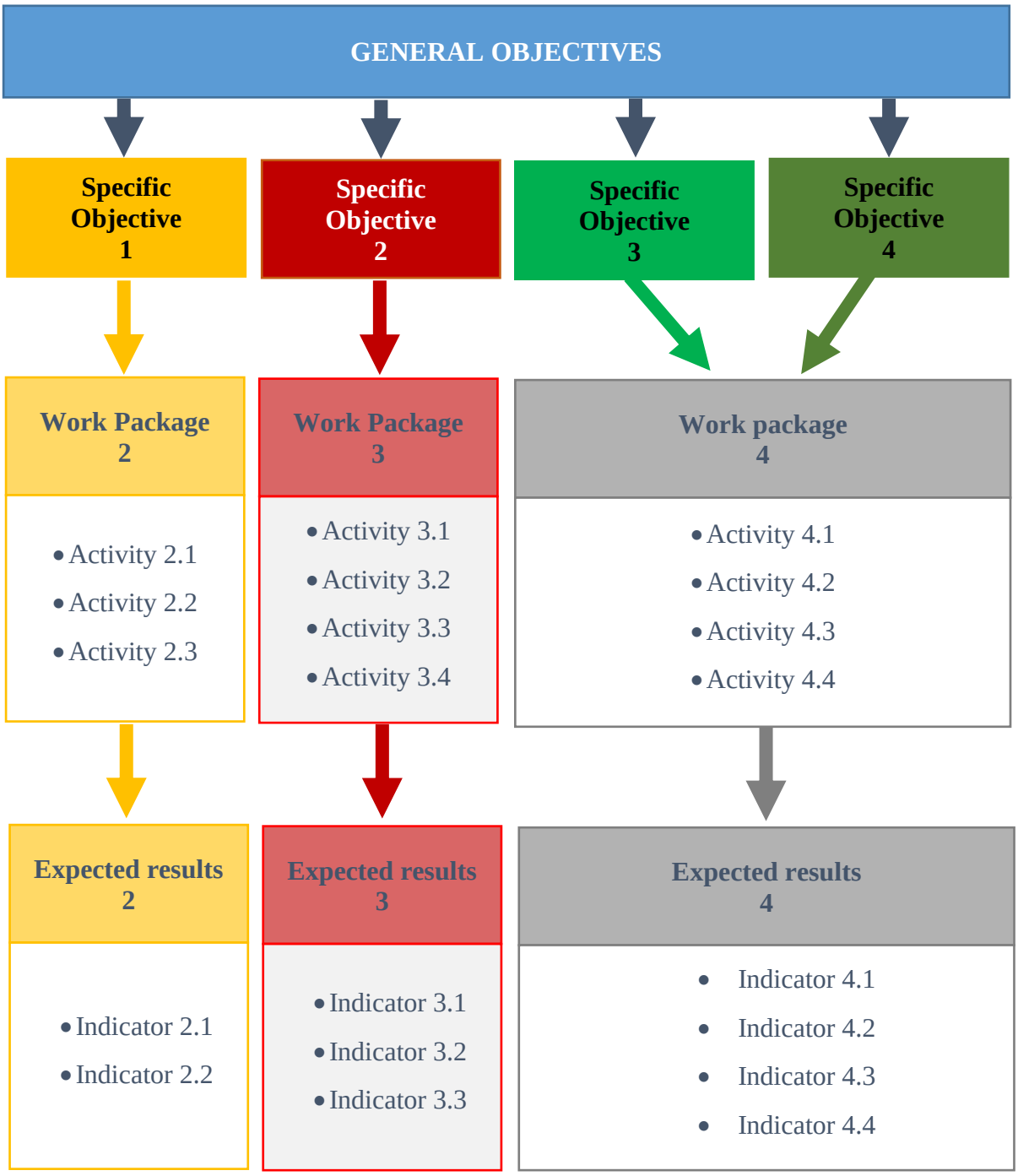
The costs that the applicant could consider in this work package when designing the project can include: costs for project management and administrative staff, project management meetings, accountancy, translations, monitoring of the project activities, etc.

The description of all **other work packages** must include references to the relevant specific objectives, illustrate and describe in detail the activities and deliverables proposed, ,clearly show how these activities are contributing to the achievement of the objectives. The distribution of tasks and responsibilities of each partner organisation must be clearly described in each work package.

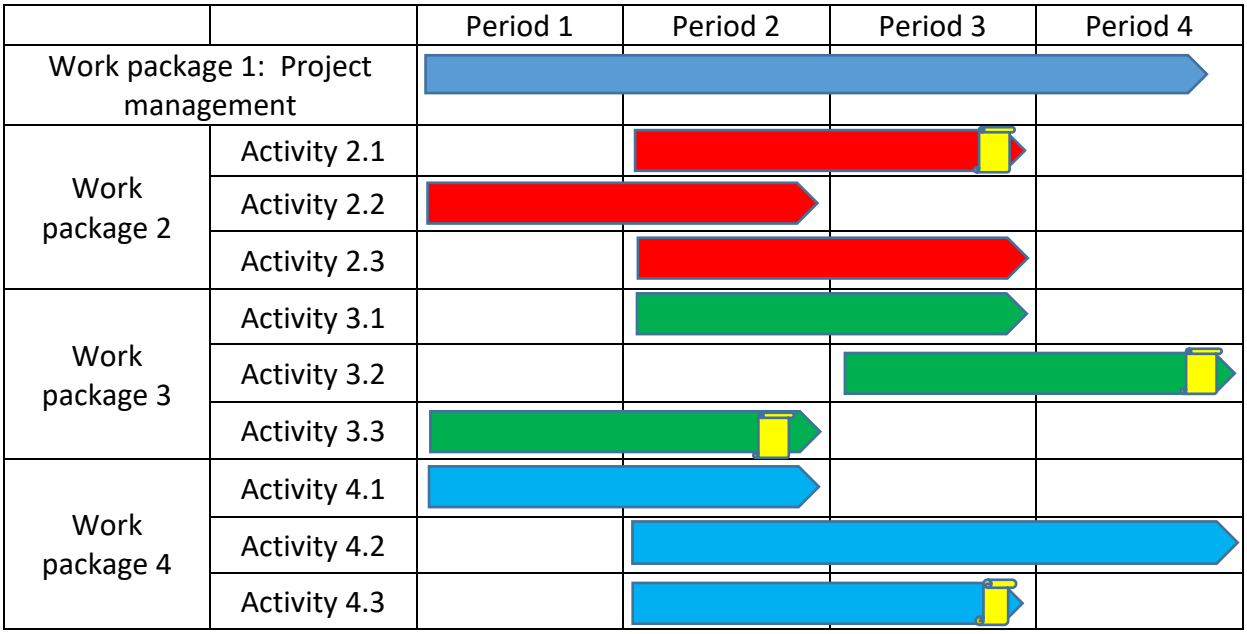
The description of the expected results must be supported by a system of quantitative and qualitative indicators that make it possible to assess the performance of the project and the relevance of each activity. Examples of indicators are presented in Annex II.

The costs that the applicant includes in each work package must be: cost-efficient, necessary for the implementation of the activities foreseen in the project, and in line with the applicant's accounting practices.

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK



In the application, applicants need to specify the timeline for all activities and deliverables in each work package. In addition, it is highly recommended to include an overview plan such as a **Gantt chart** in order to support the evaluation process, as in the example provided below. The chart can be complemented with a description.



In the application form, the budget must be detailed withing each work package per activity and per beneficiary.

The budget summary will be presented by work package and by beneficiary as in the example below:

	Coordinator	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3	Total
WP1 PM	40.000	20.000	10.000	10.000	80.000
WP 2	50.000	20.000	30.000	20.000	120.000
WP 3	10.000	50.000	70.000	30.000	160.000
WP 4	10.000	15.000	5.000	10.000	40.000
Total	110.000	105.000	115.000	70.000	**400.000**

INDICATORS

Applicants for Cooperation Partnerships have to describe each work package (except WP1 – project management) by defining specific objectives, targets, qualitative and quantitative result indicators. This section provides methodological guidance for establishing a set of indicators to support the assessment of project results.

What is an indicator?

An indicator is a measurable factor or value used to assess the quality of the project results and thus, the level of achievement of the objectives. An indicator can be quantitative or qualitative:

- **Quantitative:** defines measurable information about quantities, facts, and can be mathematically verified;

- **Qualitative:** describes events, reasons, causes, effects, experiences etc. Qualitative indicators can be made quantitative through scoring methods.

Quantitative and qualitative indicators complement each other: in addition to quantities and facts, it is also important to measure qualitative elements, so that the assessment of the level of achievement of objectives is not purely mechanical.

There are two main kinds of indicators:

- **Elementary Indicators:** provide basic information on which other indicators can be built.
    - *Example: Number of trainees, number of participants in a meeting, number of website visits, etc.*
- **Derived indicators:** based on the calculation of the ratio between two elementary indicators.
    - *Example: Number of students who passed a test, participants in a conference who presented a paper, website visitors who downloaded a document, , etc.*

Indicator ≠ Target

An indicator is a specific, measurable piece of information that helps track progress of work package implementation at a specific moment in time. A target is the desired value of the indicator at the completion of an action.

To ensure that indicators are measurable, it is recommended to include specific targets that define the intended level of achievement.

Example:

- *Target: 1000 website visits by December 2020*
- *Indicator: 500 visits in July; 750 in October; 1100 in December*

How many indicators?

There should be enough indicators so that all the major results of the project are covered, but not too many, to avoid that the measurement of indicators requires more effort than the actual project activities.

Annex 2 provides a list of examples of qualitative and quantitative indicators that were used in actual projects in the past.

5.2. Reporting

The final report for Cooperation Partnerships follows the structure of the application form, which is structured according to the quality criteria that will be assessed by the experts when the project reaches its completion. The overall structure of the report is:

- Project management
- Project implementation
- Impact and follow-up

In the section on project management, the beneficiaries are requested to report on aspects related to the cooperation among partners, working arrangements, distribution of tasks and coordination, respect of project timeline.

In the section on project implementation, the beneficiaries elaborate on the achievement of their objectives set at application stage. This should be done with the support of the quantitative and qualitative indicators identified at application stage to measure the degree by which the project objectives have been achieved. Beneficiaries need to compare the quantitative and qualitative evidence of the achieved results with the expected results stated in the application.

In the section on follow-up, beneficiaries must show how the results of the project were made available and produced benefits for the organisations participating in the project and for other stakeholders. The beneficiaries must also provide information on the sustainability and the longer-term impact of the project. In addition, if the project has developed synergies and complementarities with other financial instruments, the beneficiary must explain how the project has contributed to the objectives of these instruments.

Furthermore, at final report stage, beneficiaries are invited to carry out a lesson learnt exercise and reflect on the quality of the implementation of their project (including a comparison between the indicators proposed at application stage and the results achieved), the successes, the problems encountered, and the possible improvements in the future.

As part of the final report, the beneficiary has make their project results available in the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (by uploading them via the Beneficiary Module) as proof that the project has been implemented, and to demonstrate the quality of its results. The description of results must include the reference to relevant supporting documents such as meeting minutes, course materials, project deliverables, publications, photos etc. All results and other documents providing evidence of their achievement must be submitted with final reports. In addition, you can add other documents and materials that you consider relevant for the evaluation of the project. In such cases, these documents should be clearly referenced in the report as part of the results description. If the submitted documentation is not considered sufficient for quality assessment, assessors may request additional evidence related to the declared project results.

5.3. Quality assessment of the final report

The assessment of the final report of a lump-sum project focusses on the outputs of the project, their quality, the level of achievement of the indicators, the impact and the sustainability of the project. Each work package is evaluated separately according to specific quality criteria defined in the grant agreement. The overall project score is calculated as the weighted average of the scores for each work package. For each work package, the percentage of the budget to be paid after quality assessment is calculated separately, based on the table presented as an example below.

The Project Management work package is not scored. As the Project Management work package does not produce concrete outputs and does not have specific indicators, the result of this work package is embedded in the level of achievement of the other work packages. The total project score (weighted average) is a good indication of the overall quality of the project management. The final amount corresponding to the project management work package will represent a maximum of 20% of the total final amount calculated after any applicable reduction.

Example of project score calculation based on weighted average

The evaluation score for each work package (excluding project management) contributes to the overall project score in proportion to its assigned budget. The system calculates the weighted average of individual scores and budget shares, rounded to the nearest integer.

*In the example below: Weight Average = [(50*25) + (80*25) + (70*30)] / 80 = 66,875 => **67***

Work Package	**Budget share**	**Activities**	**Indicators**	**Reported results and impact**	**Evidence**	**Evaluation score** (1 - 100 per work package)
WP 1	20%	n/a	n/a			n/a
WP 2	25%	Activity 1.1 Activity 1.2	[described in the application and final report; assessed by the expert assessors]			50
WP 3	25%	Activity 2.1 Activity 2.2 Activity 2.3	[described in the application and final report; assessed by the expert assessors]			80
WP 4	30%	Activity 3.1 Activity 3.2	[described in the application and final report; assessed by the expert assessors]			70
Overall project score (weighted average)						**67**

Grant reduction for poor, partial or late implementation: project level

If the overall score of the project is below the threshold for poor, partial or late implementation defined in the grant agreement, the National Agency may apply a grant reduction which will be calculated on the total grant amount of project, according to the following scale:

Project score	% Grant Paid
70 – 100	100%
55 – 69	90%
40 – 54	60%
10 – 39	30%
0 – 9	0%

In the example above, with an overall project score of 67, the National Agency can apply a 10% reduction on the entire grant amount and therefore only pay 90% of the initially awarded lump sum: EUR 400 000 × 0.9 = EUR 360 000.

Grant reduction for poor, partial or late implementation: work package level

Furthermore, if the overall project score is sufficient (i.e. higher than 70), but the score of one or more work packages is not sufficient (i.e. lower than 70), a specific grant reduction can be applied to those work packages that are scored below the threshold. Those reductions will be based on the same scale presented above.

In the following example, the overall project score is 74 (over the threshold), but WP2 has a score of 50. Therefore, only 60% of the grant allocated for WP2 will be paid at the end of the project, while the budget allocated to the other work packages will be paid in full.

Work Package	Budget share	Activities	Indicators	Reported results and impact	Evidence	Evaluation score (1 - 100 per work package)
WP 1	20%	n/a	n/a			n/a
WP 2	25%	Activity 1.1 Activity 1.2	[described in the application and final report; assessed by the expert assessors]			50
WP 3	25%	Activity 2.1 Activity 2.2 Activity 2.3	[described in the application and final report; assessed by the expert assessors]			80
WP 4	30%	Activity 3.1 Activity 3.2	[described in the application and final report; assessed by the expert assessors]			90
Overall project score (weighted average)						**74**

To summarise, if the overall project score is below 70 points, the budget reduction should be applied at the level of the overall project budget; if the overall project score is above 70

points, then the budget reduction can only be applied at the level of individual work packages. Reductions can never be applied at both levels for the same project.

Grant reduction: activity level

If it is not possible to complete an activity by the end of the project, the beneficiary has to justify the situation in the final report. In exceptional cases where a project activity cannot be carried out and it is not replaced by another equivalent activity in terms of both its contribution to the objectives and its budget, the NA shall reduce the grant by rejecting the amount allocated to that activity in the project proposal.

The work package will then be assessed solely in view of the remaining activities. It is up to the assessors to determine whether the lack of that activity has further impact on the quality of the work package as a whole.

Grant reduction: breach of obligations

The grant can also be reduced if the beneficiary commits substantial errors, irregularities or fraud or serious breach of other obligations, such as, for example, the submission of false information, failure to provide required information or the obligation to ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).

6. European Partnerships for School Development

Principles and methodology described in section 5 apply also to European Partnerships for School Development, particularly when it comes to the structure of work packages and activities, budgeting, report assessment, scoring and grant calculation.

However, European Partnerships for School Development have a few specific characteristics that differentiate them from Cooperation partnerships:

1. Their **mission and policy goals are pre-defined**, as explained in the Programme Guide. The applicants will not select their own priorities.

2. There is also a **pre-defined list of tasks** that applicants must choose from when designing their partnership. Applicants must select at least three of those tasks, covering both categories of tasks. In the application form, each task corresponds to one work package.

3. European Partnerships for School Development have a predefined project budget (400 000 EUR) and a fixed project duration of three years. To be successful, applicants must reach this **minimum scale**.

4. Not all participating organisations are equal: participating **school authorities must lead the project**. This concerns the applicant organisation, but also the partner school authorities in other participating countries.

5. In addition to Project Management, European Partnerships for School Development include a second obligatory work package: the **Long-term impact plan**. It covers the planning for extending the project results beyond the project duration, making sure that the beneficiaries reflect and start working on that aspect before project end.

6. The structure of the application form is partially 'inverted': **Impact comes before Project implementation.** This highlights the key role of the 'Impact' award criterion for European Partnerships for School Development (it carries 35/100 points). The flow of the application form guides the applicants to reflect first on what problems or challenges they want to tackle and why (needs analysis and impact), the steps (results) that are needed to do that, and only then to identify the most appropriate actions to get there, together with the budget that will be needed for each action.

7. European Partnerships for School Development focus on **usage of results** and **maximising impact**, and not on production on new results. Producing something new as part of the project is optional but it is obligatory to apply either new or previously existing results or practices.

8. Award criteria for European Partnerships for School Development are **referenced explicitly in each question** of the application form. Some award criteria (notably 'Impact') are assessed across sections and applicants need to follow the guidance provided in the application form that indicates how to link the different replies into a coherent whole.

Building your European Partnership for School Development

Project idea

Needs analysis

What needs, problems, challenges, weaknesses, gaps are you encountering?

- **Illustrate!** Give examples from reality of school education.
- **Generalise!** Where do the same needs manifest beyond these examples and beyond your organisations?

Check EU relevance – is it really a European project?

- Do your needs and challenges fit into the mission and objectives of European Partnerships for School Development?
- How does working with partners from other countries make it more likely that you will address these needs?

Planned results and impact

- What do you want to change in order to address, solve, fix, improve on the needs you have identified?
- Think about changes in: **Policies; Practices; Procedures**
- What positive effects (impact!) will those changes bring?
- **Check transferability:** Can your results and solutions be applied in other places, beyond your project?

Implementation

Work package 1: Project management

- Risk prevention and management
- Monitoring: Who? How? How often?

Work Package 2

- Activity 2.1
- Activity 2.2
- Activity 2.X...

Work Package 3

- Activity 3.1
- Activity 3.2
- Activity 3.X...

Work Package 4

- Activity 4.1
- Activity 4.2
- Activity 4.X...

Tracking results

Steps, milestones and indicators: what will you observe / measure / count / analyse to know that you are making progress?

Determining achievements

Which of the planned changes did you actually achieve? To what extent? Did you achieve anything else in addition to what you had planned?

Follow-up

Tracking impact

Are your results having the **effects** that you had planned?

Impact indicators: What can you observe / measure / count / analyse to prove it?

Sharing results

Within your organisations: is everyone aware of the project and what it has brought?

Outside your organisations: the media, the schools' communities (parents), the wider public, political decision-makers?

Make it known that this an **Erasmus+** project funded by the **European Union**!

Work Package 5: Long-term impact plan

- Integrate results in everyday work
- Think ahead: how to keep going after the project end?

Where else could your results be used?

How will you continue sharing after the project end?

After the project

Execute the long-term impact plan you have developed during the project

Plan for scaling up → look for further funding, European or national; use Erasmus+ Key Action 1!

Keep sharing the results, maintain your website

Continue using eTwinning and European School Education Platform

7. Monitoring, checks and audits

7.1. Monitoring

Every project can be monitored by the National Agency. The purpose of this exercise is to check whether the implementation of the project is going well and to provide support and advice to the beneficiaries**.** The most common form of monitoring is a monitoring visit at the premises of the beneficiary, but other options exist as well – distance monitoring over the phone, online or through a dedicated survey, etc. Please note that a monitoring exercise is not an audit, and no financial documents will be checked by the National Agency.

7.2. Checks and audits

The basis for checks and audits are the expected results and result indicators (if relevant) included in the application form and approved by the National Agency. Auditors will verify the actual implementation of the activities, the achievement of the results and the reliability of the information presented in the reports. This includes compliance with rules on intellectual property, ethics and integrity, visibility of EU funding, etc.

The rules for checks, reviews, audits and investigations of lump sum grants are the same as for grant agreements based on unit contribution and actual costs, as far as general obligations and project implementation are concerned. However, no financial checks of actual costs or spent resources will be performed during final report check or other checks and audits.

Accordingly, **the beneficiaries do not have to provide exact financial records to justify the payment of the project grant**. However, the National Agency and other auditors may request to view the beneficiary's financial records or similar documentation as part of checking the reality of project implementation, fraud investigation, or similar procedures. In addition, the beneficiary must comply with internal and national record-keeping standards and other legal obligations. Grant reduction cannot take place solely based on a reconciliation of exact costs of implementation with the granted lump sum, however a grant reduction may be based on identified irregularities, fraud, or breach of other obligations under the grant agreement. Any work packages/activities which are ineligible under the grant agreement will also be rejected.

Beneficiaries should keep the Data Sheet and all relevant documentation that demonstrates the reality of the activities at least until the time-limit set out in the Grant Agreement. There is no special documentation that beneficiaries must keep specifically for lump sum grants. Same as for other types of EU grants, the beneficiaries should keep documentation showing that the work packages have been carried out (how, when, where, by whom). For example, documents proving the reality of project implementation can be recordings and analyses of impact indicators, meeting agendas and attendance lists, training materials, publications and other tangible project results, photos and videos taken during an event, recordings of online events and meetings, etc.

Checks

There are four levels of checks, as described in the grant agreement: final report check, desk check, on-the-spot check, and system check.

Final reports are checked for all projects to assess the quality and quantity of the project's results, to establish the final grant amount, to issue the final grant payment or recovery order, and to administratively close the grant agreement.

Other checks are administrative: focusing on verifying the existence, correctness and compliance of project documentation with regulatory and contractual requirements.

Audits

After closure of a grant agreement, any project can be selected for an audit by the National Agency's independent audit body or by the European Commission. The scope of the audits can vary and is communicated to the beneficiary in due time, together with the necessary practical and logistic information. Same as the National Agency checks, these audits will comply with the lump sum principle, so the documentation requested from the beneficiary will mainly be related to the implementation of the project activities and production of results. Auditors may request to view the beneficiaries' financial records with the goal of checking the reality of activities.

Occasionally, in the context of a specific exercise for periodical revision of the system of lump sums, auditors can request documentation proving the real costs incurred for some of the project activities. Such documentation is requested to check the overall lump sum system, not one project in particular. Any findings reported in such audits (except for cases of fraud) will only have the purpose to assess the effectiveness of the funding model, without financial consequences for the beneficiary.

Annex 1: Designing the project

Needs analysis

An evidence-based needs analysis is key for good planning and implementation of a project. Needs can be defined as desired changes in the context in which an organisation is functioning. Once a number of needs have been identified, their analysis consists of two main aspects:

a) Ranking the needs in terms of expected benefits for the organisation.

   Based on the expected benefits, needs can be categorised as follows:

   - **Primary:** these needs must be addressed in order to complete the project successfully;
   - **Secondary:** these needs can be addressed if project resources allow to;
   - **Side effects:** these needs could be positively affected by the project but will not be addressed directly.

b) In the formulation of the project proposal, the main needs identified should be operationalised by comparing the initial situation with the desired one (also known as "gap analysis"). As described in the following section, the formulation of general and specific objectives must correspond to the description of all the conditions needed in order to close the gap identified in the needs assessment.

Once project needs are identified and before they are translated into objectives, applicants should carry out an initial assessment of the overall cost of project to choose the lump sum amount they will request as project grant.

Setting objectives

Having defined project needs and quantified the financial support required, applicants shall set the project objectives.

A general objective can be set as a summary of the desired benefits to be achieved with the project, and in line with the Action's priorities set out in the call for proposals.

The general objective shall then be detailed into more specific and operational objectives, constituting the purposes of the concrete activities carried out in the framework of the project.

Project objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (i.e. 'S.M.A.R.T'). This framework is described in the European Commission[6] and summarised in the table below.

[6] Based on the European Commission Better Regulation toolbox #15 – How to set objectives - BRT-2023-Chapter 2-How to carry out an impact assessment_0.pdf (europa.eu)

What are S.M.A.R.T. objectives?	
Specific	Objectives should be precise and concrete enough not to be open to varying interpretations by different people.
Measurable	Objectives should define a desired future state in measurable terms, to allow verification of their achievement. Such objectives are either quantified or based on a combination of description and scoring scales.
Achievable	Project aims should be set at a level which is ambitious but at the same time realistically achievable.
Relevant	The objectives should be directly linked to the problem and its root causes.
Time-bound	Objectives should be related to a fixed date or precise time period to allow an evaluation of their achievement.

Under the lump sum funding model, it is particularly important to show a clear correlation between planned objectives, implemented activities and achieved results, since this chain constitutes the logical framework used in the qualitative evaluation of projects, which then forms the basis for payments and financial corrections.

Annex 2: How to build your indicators

In addition to providing a framework for defining objectives, the European Commission Better Regulation toolbox also provides a helpful tool for defining indicators: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9c8d2189-8abd-4f29-84e9-abc843cc68e0_en?filename=BR%20toolbox%20-%20Jul%202023%20-%20FINAL.pdf.

According to this framework the indictors should be R.A.C.E.R – as explained in the table below.

What are R.A.C.E.R. indicators?	
Relevant	Closely linked to the objective to be achieved. They should not be overambitious and must measure the right thing
Accepted	The definition of the indicator and the way it is measured should be agreed by all partners and the linked responsibilities should be clearly attributed.
Credible	Not ambiguous and verifiable, also for external observers.
Easy	Data collection should be easy and not expensive. The information provided by the indicator should be easily understandable.
Robust	The value of the indicator is not easy to manipulate.

The table below provides a list of example indicators. It is non-exhaustive, purely indicative and aims at facilitating the work of applicants in defining quantitative and/or qualitative measures for the achievement of their project objectives.

Examples of indicators	
Quantitative	**Qualitative**
<u>Number of</u> - Participants in events, meetings, training activities, etc. - Partner meeting reports - Public events connected with objectives and results of the project - Registrations to e-learning courses - Hits at the project website - Unique visitors to websites - Visits to project's blog and documents downloaded - Public and private entities to which project's results are shared - Stakeholders and multipliers reached through the networking activities of the	- Improved media literacy by rating online information, validating the resources, carrying out intelligent searching, etc. - Satisfaction level of the participating institutions - Participants' satisfaction in training activities - Satisfaction of participants with the provided educational materials and guest lecturers - Improved competences of the partners to teach intercultural competences - Quality and extent of the evaluation reports from participants - Involvement of the partners in the project activities through the lead-partners and quality of the results - Teachers with improved skills in curriculum

partners - Manuals in different languages - Certificates developed and their use in the participating countries - Modified or constituted internal norms or procedures that have been established in each country aimed at companies or teaching institutions - Gained Open Badges and usage of other digital tools - Questionnaires distributed and number of respondents **<u>Percentage of:</u>** - Students who consider that their skills (e.g. IT) have been significantly enhanced - Students who consider that their intercultural values have been significantly promoted - Students who consider that their active youth participation voting have been significantly encouraged - Teachers who consider that their teaching competences have been significantly improved - Headmasters who consider the project has contributed significantly to cope with needs of the school - Teachers willing to exploit Handbooks as new method for early identification of learning difficulties in primary education	delivery, employing a wider range of classroom strategies, evidenced in observations of teaching - Level of organisational know-how in the field of youth workers' training and learning app development - Positive feedback from end-user groups and experts as well as participants in the testing phase of the project - Best practices and stories developed and disseminated by participants - Socially responsiveness and willing to participate in change - Assessment through comparing the project outputs with the original status quo before the beginning of the project activities - Feedback from students and direct observation of them in the classroom and virtually will show visible progress and the attainment of the planned aims and goals will be recorded by analysing their active participation in the activities - Compliance with work plan both in administrative and technical activities: respect of outputs/results standard provided within the proposal - Punctuality, completeness and timeliness in the preparation and delivery of outputs, reports and other information - Level of communication and participation of partners (meetings, workshop, conference call, collaboration in arranging working material and activities, etc.)

Annex 3: Recommendations on consortium agreements[7]

For a successful project implementation, it is highly recommended that project partners sign a partnership agreement. While the project grant agreement defines the rights and obligations between the project beneficiaries and the National Agency, a partnership agreement is a private agreement between the beneficiaries that defines their rights and obligations amongst themselves. Therefore, the co-beneficiaries are fully responsible for it.

The consortium agreement should be negotiated and concluded before signing the project grant agreement. It is recommended to start your negotiations at the proposal stage by drawing up a draft agreement. This enables you to discuss and agree on how to handle important (and often sensitive) matters, and to involve all partners in the drafting. The draft agreement will then be used as a starting point for further discussions if your project proposal is accepted.

The partnership agreement allows partners to agree on any specific details not covered by the grant agreement, such as the management and governance of the partnership, the organisation of work and division of tasks, the communication channels between the beneficiaries, frequency of meetings, the language of communication, budget distribution, payment arrangement, intellectual property management, liability, methods for resolving disputes and conflict, future exploitation and dissemination of results, etc. However, the partnership agreement must not contain any provision contrary to the project grant agreement.

[7] See Article 7 of the Grant greement