Interreg Programme
Danube Region

Co-funded by
the European Union

Guidelines for filling in the expression of interest

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Foreword

The submission of the Expression of Interest (EoI) is the first step in applying for funding within the first Call for Proposals (CfP) of the Danube Region Programme (DRP).

These guidelines present the main technical requirements and steps for filling in and submitting an EoI for the DRP 1st Call for Proposals in the electronic monitoring system Jems.

General information about the programme and rules such as eligibility or project intervention logic are subject of the Applicants Manual CfP, therefore it should be considered complementary to this guidelines when working on an application.

Restrictions or specific rules, if any, for a certain call will be explained in the Call Announcements.

Introduction

The Application Pack consists of:

- Danube Region Programme (DRP) document (IP)
- DRP Applicants Manual
- Manual on eligibility of expenditure
- DRP 1st Call announcement
- Guidelines for filling in the EoI

Before filling in the Expression of Interest (EoI) in the electronic monitoring system Jems, it is very important for the applicants to carefully read the DRP IP and all the documents in the Application Pack.

The DRP Interreg Programme (IP) is the most important reference document concerning, among others, the thematic scopes of the four Priority Areas, objectives and indicators.

The DRP Applicants Manual provides useful information and guidance regarding the main rules, requirements and procedures to apply for funding from Danube Region Programme.

The DRP Call announcement offers specific information and requirements in relation to the 1st Call, including the deadline for submission.

The Expression of Interest (EoI) is to be submitted electronically via Jems (electronic monitoring system of the DRP).

I. Technical requirements and registration to Jems

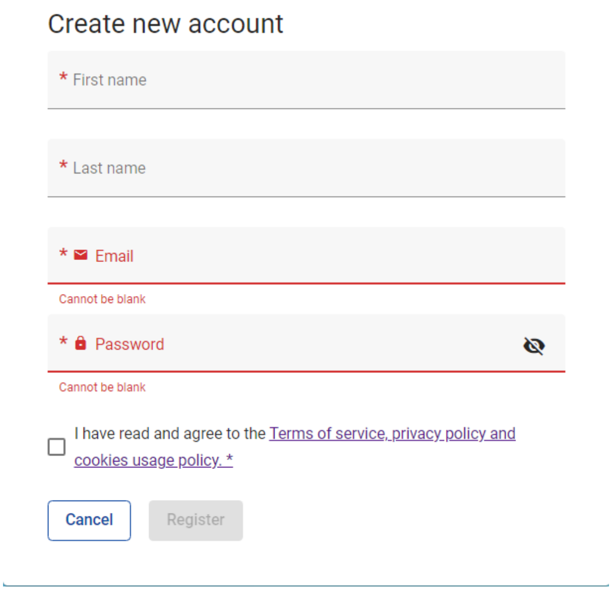
In order to be able to apply to the 1st call, each Lead Applicant (LA) has to register in the Jems system. The email address used for registering will be the one of the LA. The LA can add further users, as described in detail in section IV. of this document.

Jems is a web application and can be used with any up-to-date web browsers. Recommended browsers are Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox. For technical reasons, Jems only supports the latest version of these browsers. The functionality of the system follows the common standards of web applications for entering and submitting form data.

II. Access and registration

To use Jems, each applicant must first register by clicking on "Create a new account" on the homepage and provide a set of credentials.

In the registration form, fill in the following information (all fields marked with "*" are mandatory):



First name / Last name: personal information of the applicant's contact person.

Email: the email address of the applicant – it will be used to log in and notifications will be addressed to it.

Password: password which will be used to access the Jems. The minimum length of the password is 10 characters. It should contain at least one upper case letter, one lower case letter and one digit.

Please also tick that you have read and accepted "The Terms of Service and privacy policy".

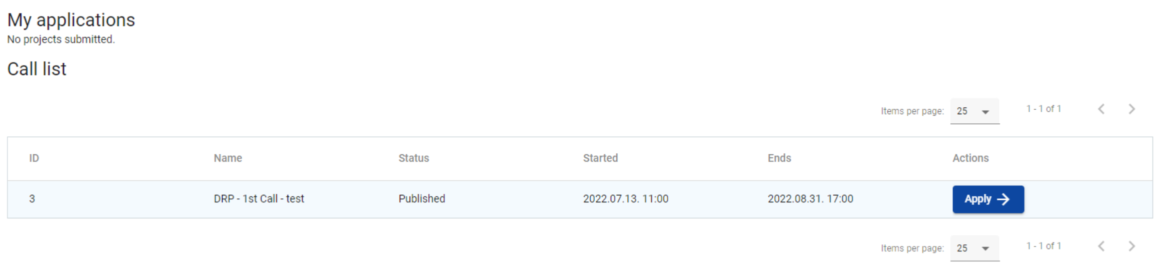
The "Register" button turns active once all mandatory information is filled in. Following the registration, a confirmation email is automatically sent to the email address provided in the "Create new account" form.

Only after receipt of the confirmation and validation by clicking on the "Confirm Account" button in this email, the applicant will be able to log into the platform and create an Expression of Interest (EoI). In case you do not receive an email confirmation, please check your spam folder and, if needed, get in touch with the DRP MA/JS (jemshelpdesk@interreg-danube.eu) for assistance.

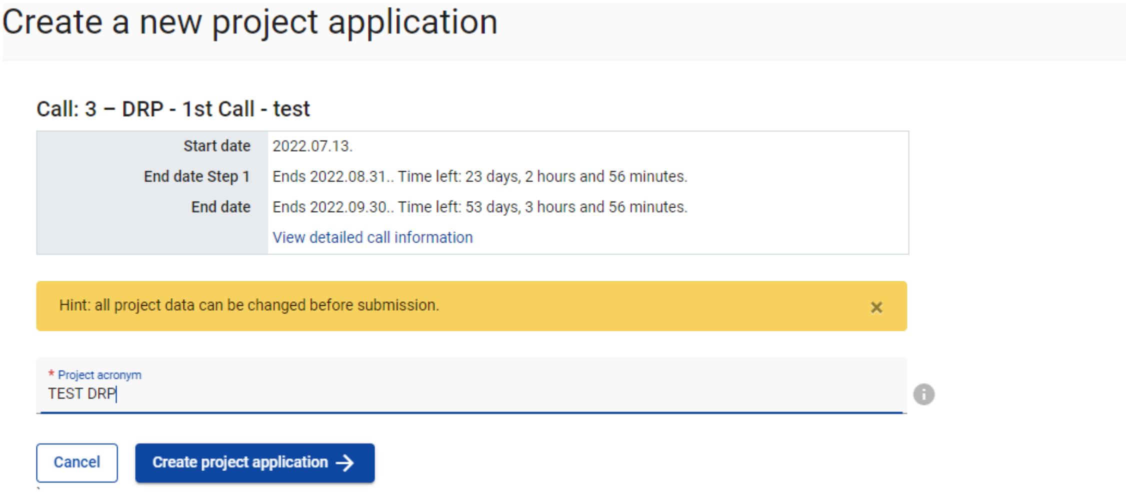
In case you forgot your password please click on the "Forgot password" button. By doing this, you will receive a Reset password link to the originally provided e-mail address where you will be able to create a new password. Finally, a confirmation e-mail is sent on the successful password reset. In case you forgot your user name (e-mail address with which you registered), please contact us at jemshelpdesk@interreg-danube.eu.

III. Creating the EoI and applying for the call

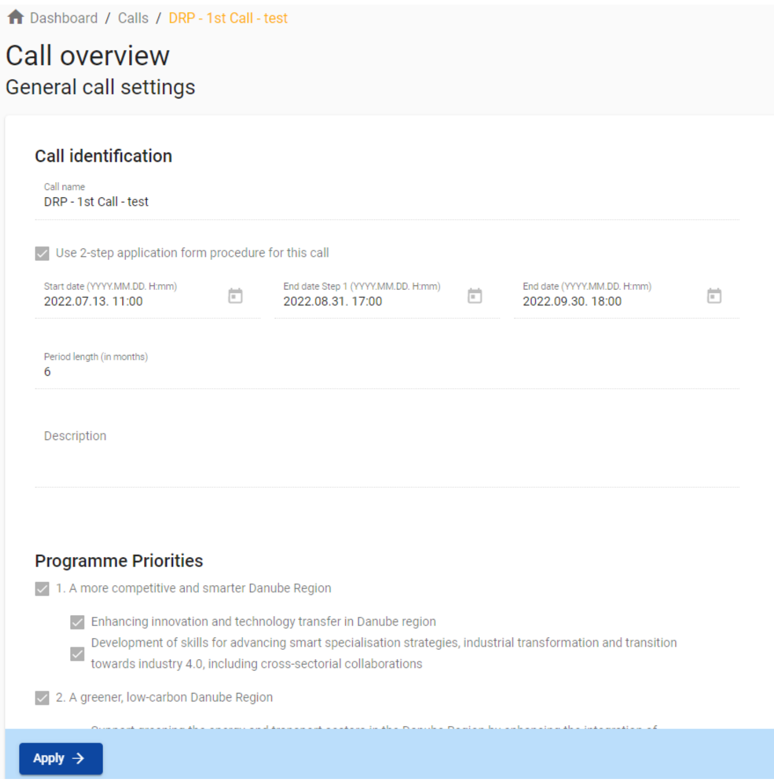
To create your EoI click on "Apply" of the respective call under the section "Call list" of your dashboard.



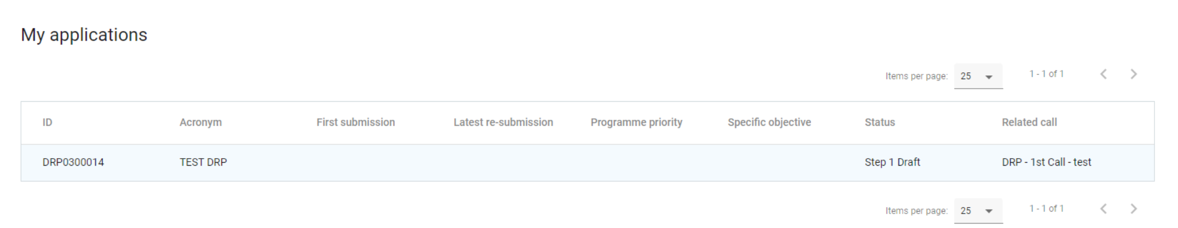
At this point, insert the acronym of your project (which can always be modified afterwards until the EoI is submitted) and click "Create project application".



Alternatively, it is possible to click on the call row itself under the same section "Call list" and see the general call information through a read-only window. The "Apply" button is displayed at the bottom of this page.



The newly created application will be visible on the Dashboard under section "My Applications". The project ID is automatically generated by the system.

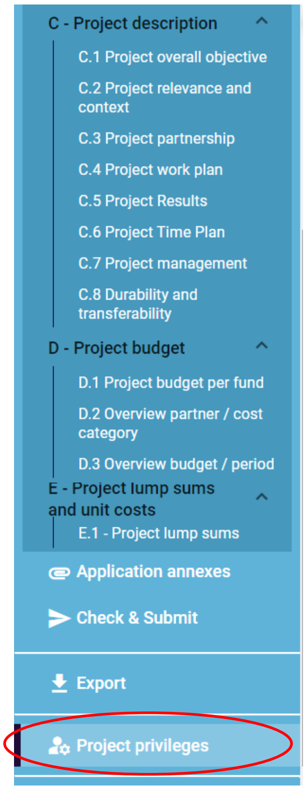


All applications created by one user are listed at this level - the user can open a project by clicking on the name.

IV. User management

The lead applicant (LA) can grant access rights for opening the EoI to the project partners or collaborators. In order to receive access rights a third party should register in Jems and provide the LA with the email address of the registered user.

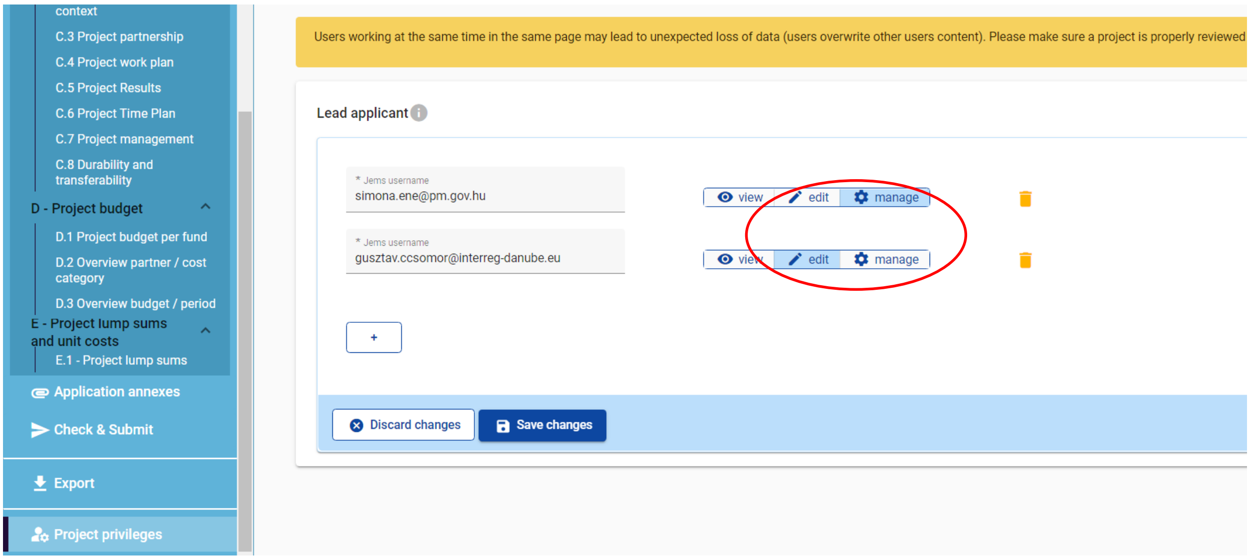
The access right is enabled in the „Project privileges" section:



Users can be granted either:

- ✓ **read-only rights** ("view") – a user can access all the EoI sections without being in the position of making any change
- ✓ **edit rights** ("edit") – a user can modify/fill in all the EoI sections

✓ **lead applicant rights** ("manage") – a user has both edit rights, but also access to the management of the "Project privileges" section.



<u>**Only users with "manage" rights can submit the Expression of Interest, thus we recommend that only the LA has the manage rights while the other users are assigned only "edit" or "read" only rights**</u>

<u>**ATTENTION:**</u>

It is possible for different users to work at the same time on the same EoI. When working in parallel, users have to make sure that they are not working simultaneously in the same section or sub-section as there is the risk to overwrite information or data loss. Consequently coordinating who is working when in the EoI is crucial for a smooth use of Jems during the application phase.

Any data loss due to working in parallel on the same EoI is the full responsibility of the LA and the MA/JS cannot be held liable.

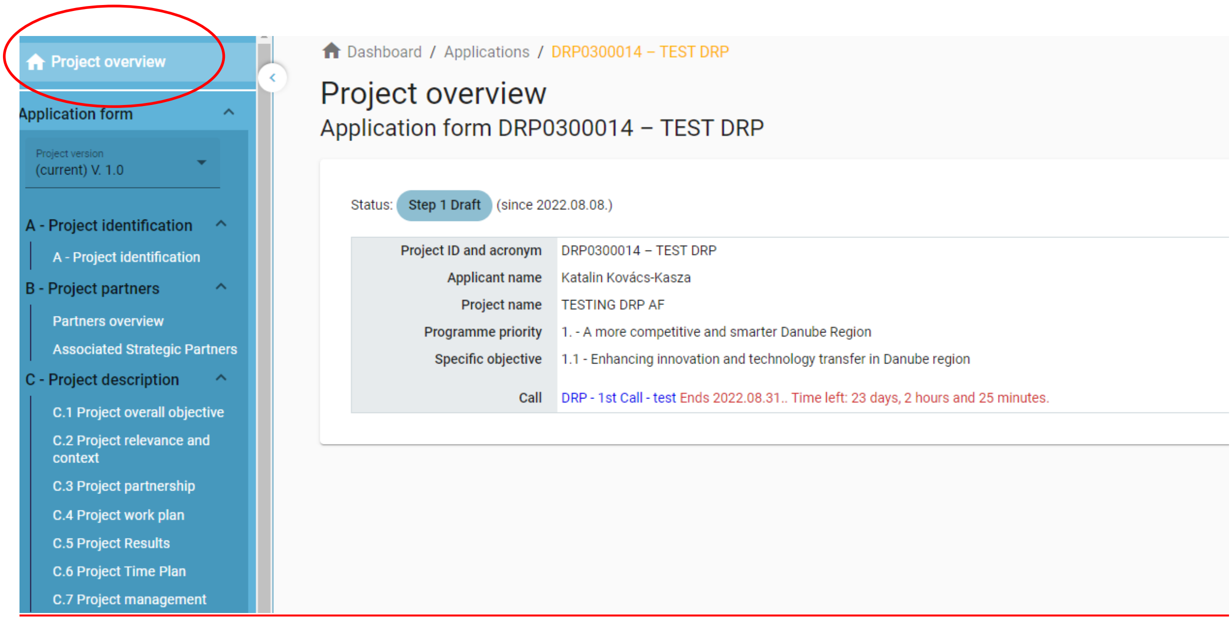
V. Filling in the EoI

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview on how to fill in all applicable parts of the EoI. Before starting filling in the EoI, please consider the following carefully:

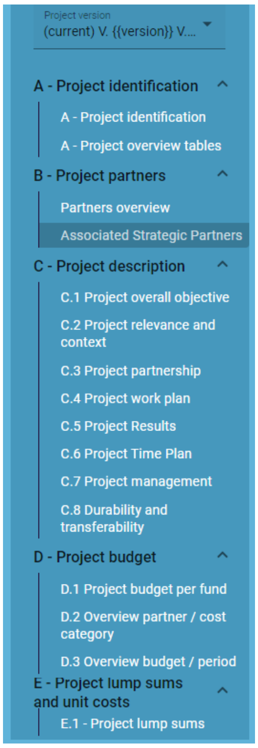
➢ **EoIs shall be submitted within the deadline** indicated in the Call Announcement. Applicants are advised not to submit the EoI at the very last moment as the system may not be able to process a high number of submissions in a short time, thus causing delays resulting in impossibility to submit the project after deadline (Jems automatically closes the call after the expiration of the deadline).

- In case an LA creates several versions of the same EoI and submits them only the **last version** submitted before the deadline will be considered for assessment.
- Only the **EoIs submitted through the Jems** in accordance with these Guidelines will be considered for assessment.
- Only **EoIs written in English** will be considered for assessment.
- The partnership consists of **at least three financing partners from at least three DRP participating countries** of which at least one is located in a EU Member State.
- The Lead Applicant fulfils the **LA eligibility requirements**.
- The Lead Applicant cannot be changed between the two steps of the Call for Proposals (i.e. first step being the expression of interest (EoI) – second the full application form (AF).
- Projects have to contribute to **at least two programme output and result indicators** to be considered eligible (unless different rules are set in a specific call). One of these shall be Output RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders, which is mandatory for all the projects.
- At least 3 joint cooperation levels are indicated.
- The project intervention logic cannot be changed between the two steps (i.e. EoI - AF).
- Between the two steps (i.e. EoI - AF) changes (replacement and/ or withdrawal) of directly financed partners do not exceed 4 financing partners. There is no limit to adding new partners.
- The **maximum number of characters** allowed in each text box of the EoI is indicated by the system.

The “Project overview” page offers general information on the proposal, its application status and the running call. Every application has a version number. When created the project version number is set to “V.1.0” by default – the latter will remain unchanged until the submission of your proposal. The status “Draft” changes to “Submitted” right after the submission.

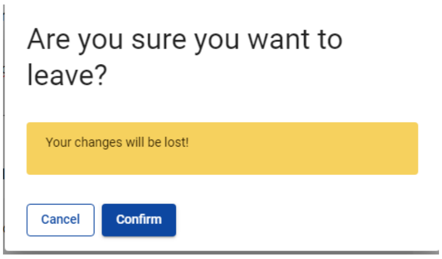


Applicants can fill in the relevant sections and sub-sections listed on the left menu, which corresponds to the EoI template.



The “trash” icon allows the LA to delete certain sections. Some sections can only be saved, once all mandatory fields (marked with an asterisk “*”) are filled in. The order of the project partners, specific objectives, outputs, etc. follows the one in which they were added in the Jems. This order cannot be changed unless the related sections are deleted and modified.

Jems provides warnings or requests for confirmation before leaving certain sections of the EoI. Always remember to save data before leaving a section of the EoI in order to avoid losing information.



When filling in the EoI:

Follow the number of characters indicated in the different fields - characters in excess will not be taken into account in Jems. Please note that the punctuation and spaces between words or paragraphs are considered as characters.

Do not use the “Enter” key of your keyboard to save data while filling in the forms as it may lead to unexpected results. Always use the commands provided by the Jems interface.

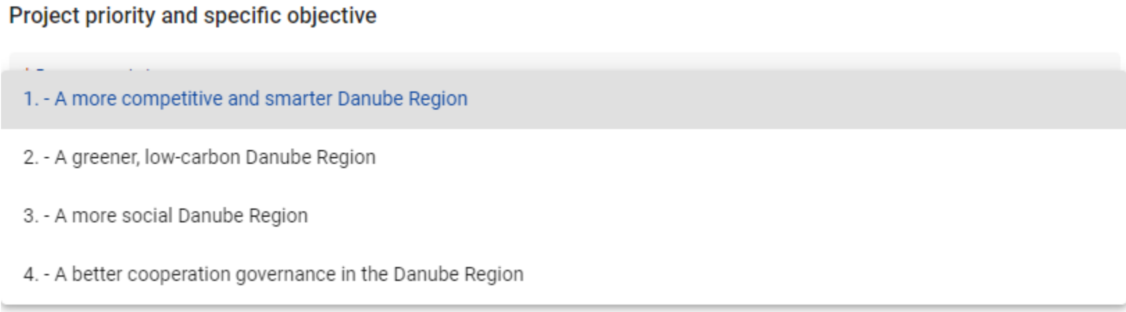
- ✓ When filling in longer sections, please **regularly save** in order to avoid losing data in case of interruptions of your internet connection or any other technical issues.
- ✓ Being inactive for a long period may automatically end your session for security reasons and unsaved data will be lost!

Section A – Project identification

Most fields in this section are self-explanatory or automatically generated.

Under “Project Identification”, Project ID will be automatically generated by Jems. Name of the Lead Partner Organisation will be automatically filled in from part B.

The applicants shall insert the project title and acronym. Please note that effective acronyms should be related to the project title and concept, be easily remembered and should not be in conflict with existing brands and/or projects. The Project priority and specific objective shall be selected from a drop-down menu as shown below:



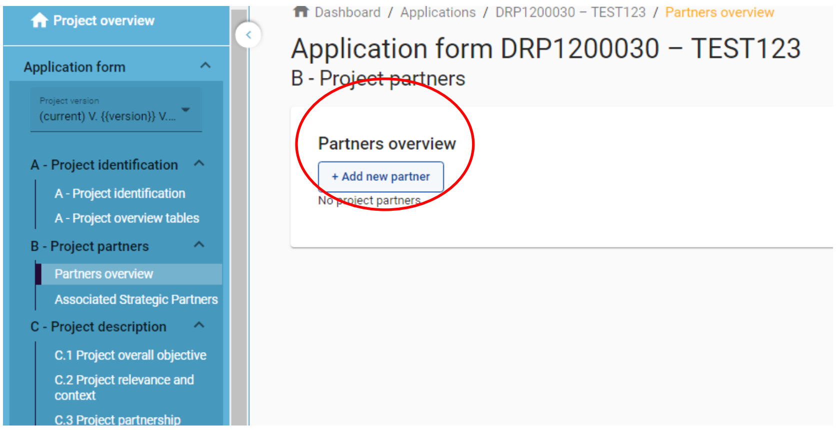
The maximum duration of the projects is 30 months.

In the field **Project Summary** a concise overview shall be provided, highlighting the main characteristics, strategic direction(s) and envisaged main achievements of the project.

Project Partner overview, Project budget overview, Project outputs and result overview sections are automatically generated.

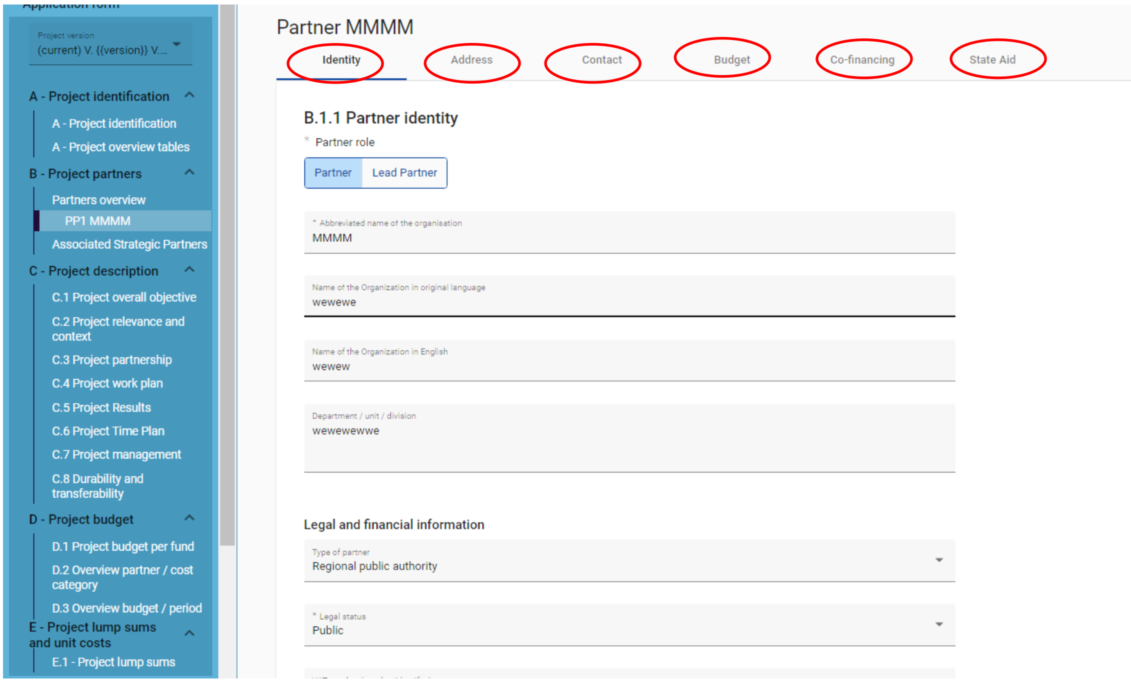
Section B – Project partners

Project partners can be added by entering the **Partners overview** section and clicking the “Add new partner” button:



Once all information referring to the identification of the LP/PP is filled in, the Create button can be clicked.

When opening the created partner section, in the upper part the LA can see several tabs which have to be filled in for each partner.



The first three tabs refer to the identification of the LP/PP, data related to address, contact details, contact persons. The LA (or any registered user with edit rights) should fill in all the requested information.

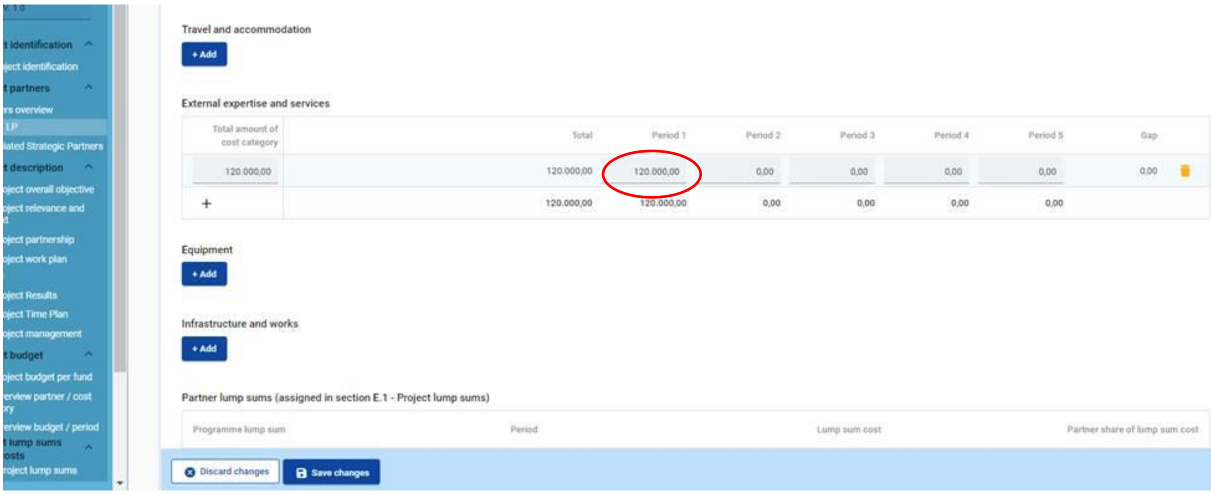
Besides selecting partner's role (LP or PP) the following information shall be filled in: abbreviated name of the organisation, name of the organisation in original language, name of the organisation in English and department/division/unit (if applicable). Legal and financial information shall also be filled in: the type of partner and the legal status of the partner shall be selected from a drop-down menu. VAT number and information about VAT recovery (yes, no, or partially) shall be indicated.

Address details shall be inserted in the corresponding fields. Information about NUTS codes is included in the EoI form with direct link. In the contact tab title, first and last name of the legal representative and title, first and last name, E-mail address and telephone number of the contact person shall be inserted.

Tab "budget"

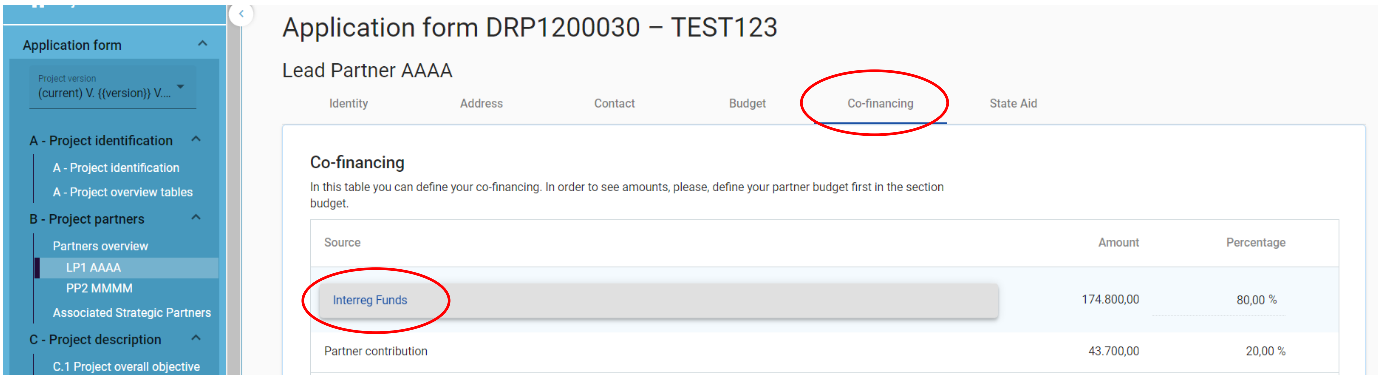
Please note that before starting to fill in the budget, make sure you have defined the project duration in section "A - Project identification", so that the correct number of "periods" appear in the different budget tables.

ATTENTION: For the EoI purpose the LA shall include only the total budget of each partner, without detailing the budget lines. The total budget of each partner shall be included in the cost category external expertise and services, period 1.

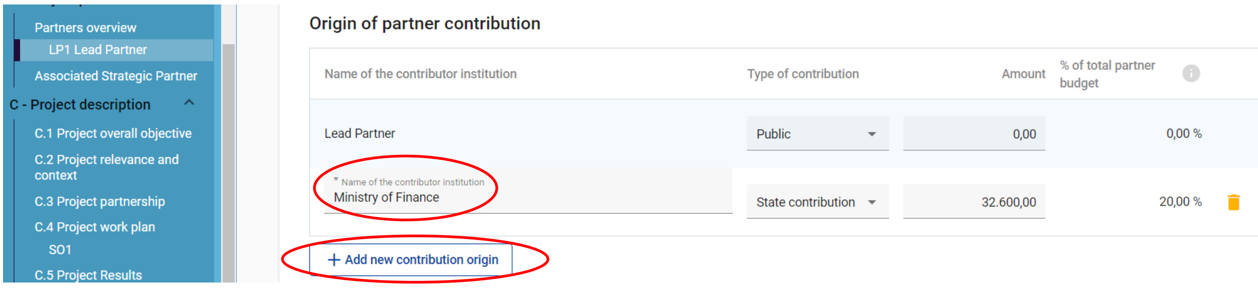


Tab co-financing

The co-financing source has first to be selected via a drop-down menu: “Interreg Funds” is the only source available for DRP. The partner contribution entry (amount and percentage columns) is automatically calculated.



The origin of the partner contribution, its type of contribution (private, public, or state) and its amount must be filled in. In case a PP receives “state contribution” (see definition of state contribution in the Applicants Manual) that source can be added by clicking on the “+ Add new contribution origin”, then selecting “State contribution” from the drop-down list, as well as entering the name of institution that is providing the state contribution for the respective PP (field is compulsory to be filled). The total of contribution should not be higher than the total target value stated in red by Jems.



Please note, that if changes to the partner budget are done after filling in the Co-financing section then also the the Co-financing section has to be updated.

Associated strategic partners (ASPs)

Associated startegic partners can be added by clicking "Add new associated strategic partner" button:

Once added the applicant has to fill in the data of the ASP in terms of organisation data, selecting the LP/PP supporting the ASP, legal representative, contact person and the role of the ASP in the project.

Section C – Project description

The text fields in the project description should be filled in with the required information, with special attention to the maximum number of characters.

C.1 Project overall objective

This section is self-generated based on previously inserted data in Section A. The applicants shall define the Project main objective. It should be clearly described, highlighting how it contributes to the achievement of the selected Programme Specific Objective. Furthermore, there should be a clear connection between the project's main objective, the identified needs and challenges in the addressed area and the proposed activities.

Section C.2 - Project relevance and context

Please consider that the numbering of subsections in C.2 are based on the full AF structure and since in the EoI only three subsections are to be filled in, their numbering are not necessarily in consecutive order

Sub-section C.2.1. What are the common territorial needs and challenge(s) that will be tackled by the project?

Applicants are expected to outline here the main, common challenges and needs of the addressed area in relation to the project topic. The description is expected to make clear why these needs and challenges are relevant in the context of the programme's objectives, as well as the information for the target area of the project should be provided on country level. In case pilot actions are planned for certain areas, details about the particular needs of these areas should also be provided.

Sub-section C.2.3 Why is transnational cooperation needed to address the identified needs and challenges?

Applicants shall describe the benefits, advantages and added value of the transnational approach in achieving the project's objective. The transnational dimension of the project should be described in the light of planned activities (i.e. the project topic, the addressed challenge having transnational territorial and/or thematic relevance, transnationally versus locally implemented activities, transfer of knowledge and experience, joint work from which all involved territories benefit) as well as its transnational impact (i.e. explain how project activities and outputs will positively affect the addressed area and justifying that based on those the impact of the project can be considered relevant on a transnational scale and not only on a local level in different parts of the region). The applicants must demonstrate that transnationality is present throughout the project (planning, implementation of activities, achievement and dissemination of achieved results) and that the project arises from a common need and it does not represent a collection of local actions.

Sub-section C.2.4 – Who will benefit from the project outputs?

Please read carefully the guidance provided for this sub-section in Jems. Please note, that in the "specification"-field not only further details shall be provided on the exact kind and scope of the target group but also on *how* the target group will be involved in and how they will benefit from the project.

Additional target groups can be added by clicking on the + -button.

Section C.3 - Project Partnership

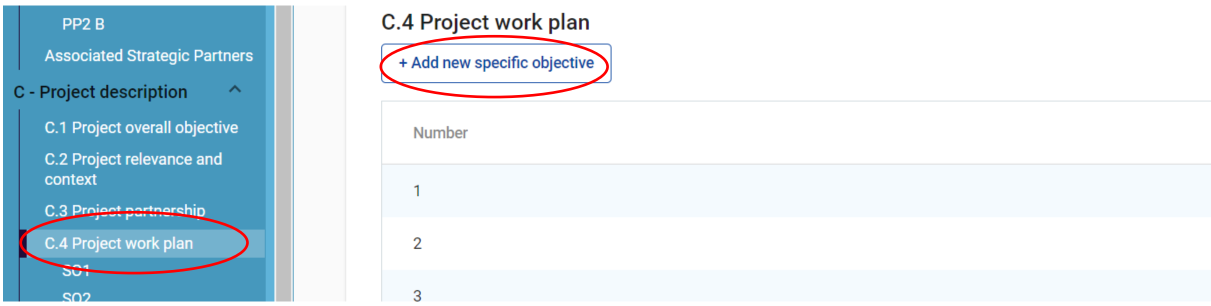
The applicants shall explain how the composition of the partnership can effectively implement foreseen activities and deliver the planned outputs (i.e. thematic and territorial competence, expertise and role of the partners versus project activities), includes all sectors relevant for the project topic and covers the entire targeted geographical area (e.g. Danube region or the specific territorial scope of the project). A brief description of the partners' experience in cooperation projects shall be also included, if relevant. The partnership composition should also reveal the benefits for the territories they represent.

Section C.4 – project work plan

Before defining the project work plan, please read carefully the *II.7 Intervention logic* section of the Applicant's Manual and get familiar with how to define the intervention logic for a project proposal, as well as with the terminology of objectives, outputs and results!

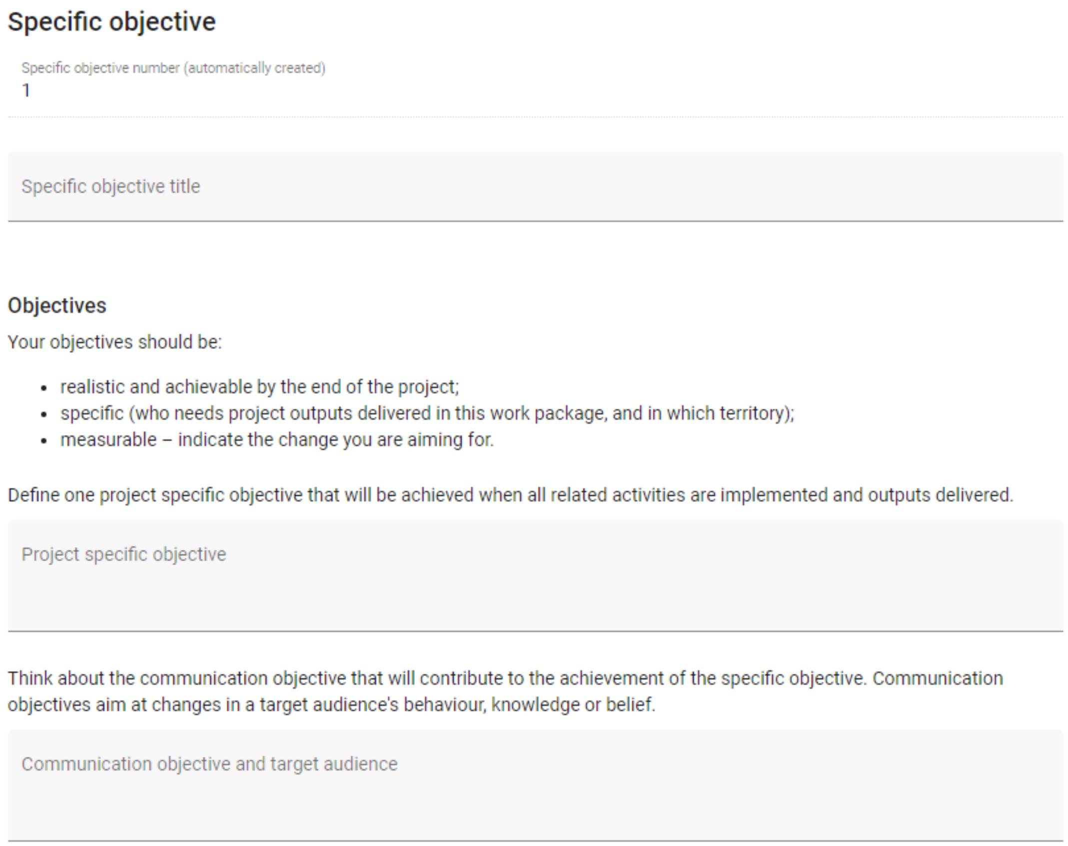
In order to edit this section please proceed as follows:

First define the number and kind of Specific Objectives by clicking on "C.4 Project Work Plan" in the left-side menu and opening specific objectives with the "+add new specific objective"-button on the main-screen.



For each project specific objective please give a brief title that appropriately reflects the specific objective and define more in detail in the related text field the specific and immediate effects of the project that can be realistically achieved within the implementation period.

In connection to each specific objective please define also a communication objective.



Specific objective

Specific objective number (automatically created)
1

Specific objective title

Objectives

Your objectives should be:

- realistic and achievable by the end of the project;
- specific (who needs project outputs delivered in this work package, and in which territory);
- measurable – indicate the change you are aiming for.

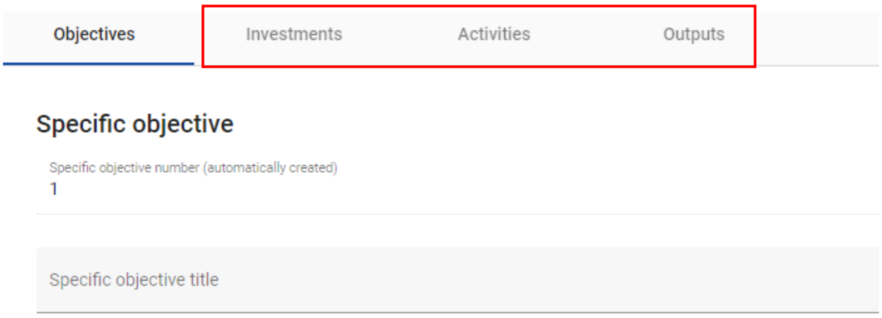
Define one project specific objective that will be achieved when all related activities are implemented and outputs delivered.

Project specific objective

Think about the communication objective that will contribute to the achievement of the specific objective. Communication objectives aim at changes in a target audience's behaviour, knowledge or belief.

Communication objective and target audience

As a next step, click on one of the further tabs related to investments, activities and outputs.



Objectives | Investments | Activities | Outputs

Specific objective

Specific objective number (automatically created)
1

Specific objective title

Tab "Investment"

To each specific objective investments can be linked, if applicable. Applicants have to indicate the number, the title of the investment and have to justify, why this investment is needed and have to describe the transnational relevance of it as well. Applicants shall indicate the objective of the investment in correlation with the project objectives and the involvement of the partners. Location and ownership of the investment shall be indicated. Applicants shall provide a thorough justification for the investment explaining its necessity for the implementation of the project and achievement of the project objectives, its transnational character of transferability to at least two other participating countries, in accordance with the Programme specific requirements.

Please note that in the DRP investments are eligible only in case they:

Follow a transnational physical or functional link over the national border (e.g. transport corridors) which has been analysed from a transnational point of view and has a clear impact over the national borders

or

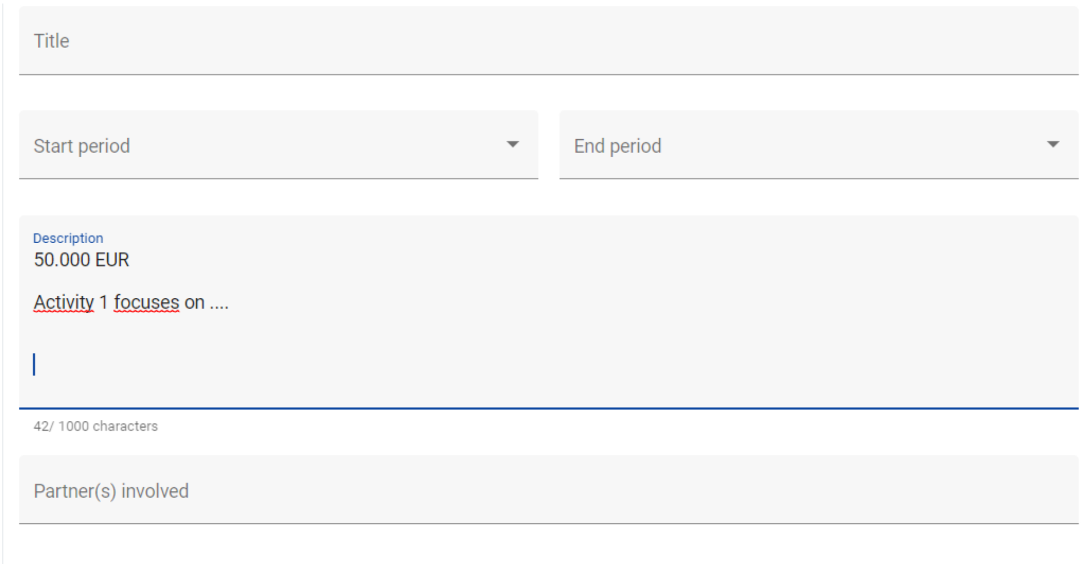
Create a transferable practical solution through a case study in one area, which is jointly evaluated by the project partners and transferred for testing in at least two other participating countries

Tab "Activities"

Open an activity by clicking the "add activity" button and edit all of the offered fields.

There is no limitation in terms of number of activities, but the applicant should propose a manageable number of activities.

Please start editing the field "description" by indicating the activity budget in the very first line, followed by an empty line, and only then narrative description shall be inserted (as shown below).



The description of the activities must be clear and concise and should contain the tasks that are going to be performed by the project partners. Applicants should avoid generic terms (such as concepts, definitions) or too general descriptions that do not contain a geographical and time reference. The project partners and ASPs involved should be indicated.

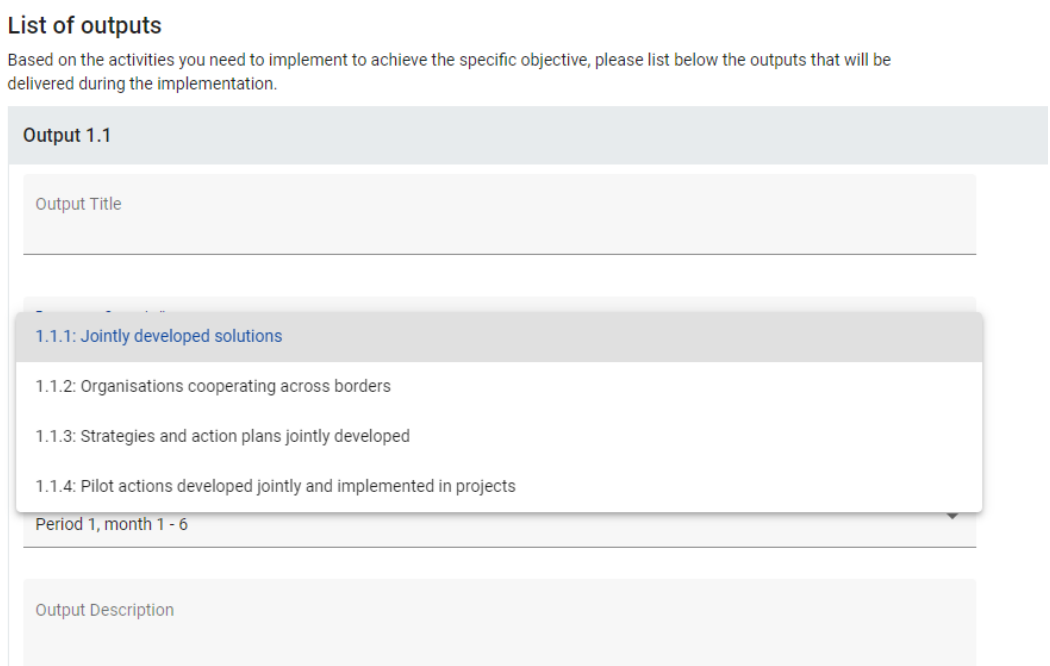
Tab "Outputs"

Create an output by clicking the "add output" button and edit all of the offered fields.

There is no limitation in terms of number of outputs.

In the drop-down menu under "Programme output indicator" please select one of the offered indicators. Please choose the indicator to which the output is contributing to.

Projects have to contribute to at least two programme output and result indicators to be considered eligible. One of these shall be Output RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders, which is mandatory for all the projects.

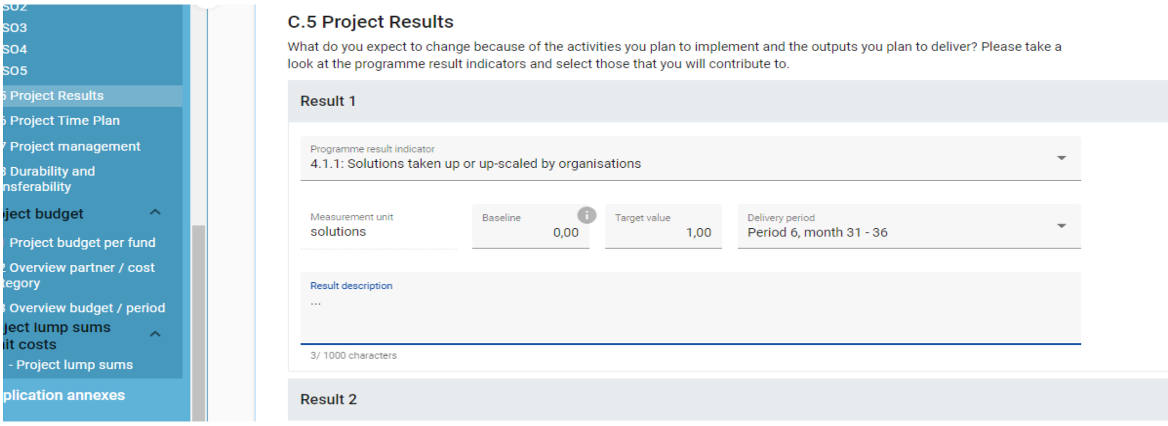


Please define for each output a title and describe in detail in the respective fields.

Section C.5 - Project Results

In this section the project results shall be defined and described in relation to the Programme Result Indicators.

A result can be created through clicking on "Add result". First a Programme Result Indicator has to be selected from the drop-down menu and then further information on target values and delivery date has to be provided ("measurement unit" and "baseline-value" are auto-generated). The project result shall then be described more concretely in the "Result description" field, the immediate advantages of carrying out the project, reflecting the benefit of using the project main outputs.



Section C.6 - Project Time Plan

The project time plan is auto-generated based on the data inserted in previous sections.

Section C.7 - Project Management

Please consider that the numbering of subsections in C.7 are based on the full AF structure and since in the EoI only two subsections are to be filled in, their numbering is not necessarily in consecutive order

In sub-section C.7.5 "Cooperation Criteria" please select and describe relevant cooperation criteria.

Please, note that in order to be eligible, projects must contribute to at least three out of the four cooperation criteria "Joint development" and "Joint implementation" being compulsory elements.

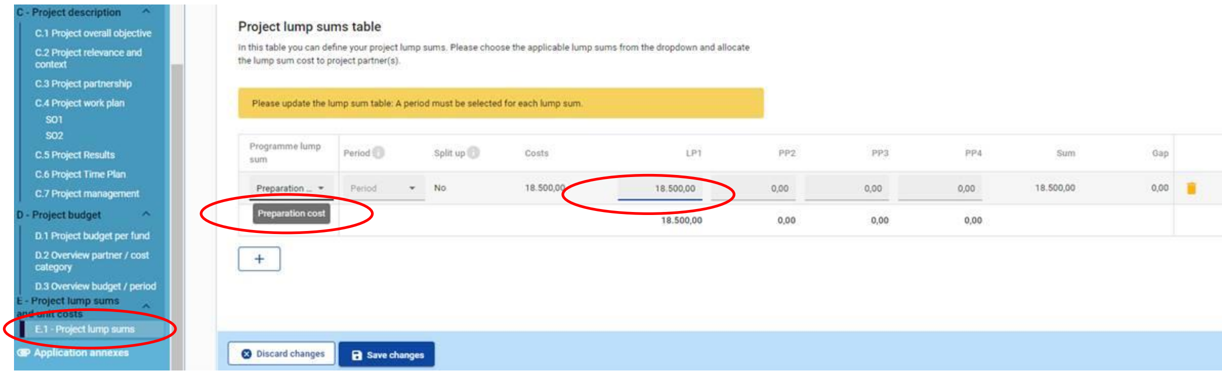
More details on Cooperation Criteria are provided in the Applicants Manual.

Under sub-section **C.7.6. "Horizontal Principles"** please indicate and describe the project's respective contributions. Before filling in this part of the application, please read carefully the section *II.4 Horizontal Principles* section of the Applicants Manual defining what information is to be provided for the different issues.

Section E.1 Project lump sums

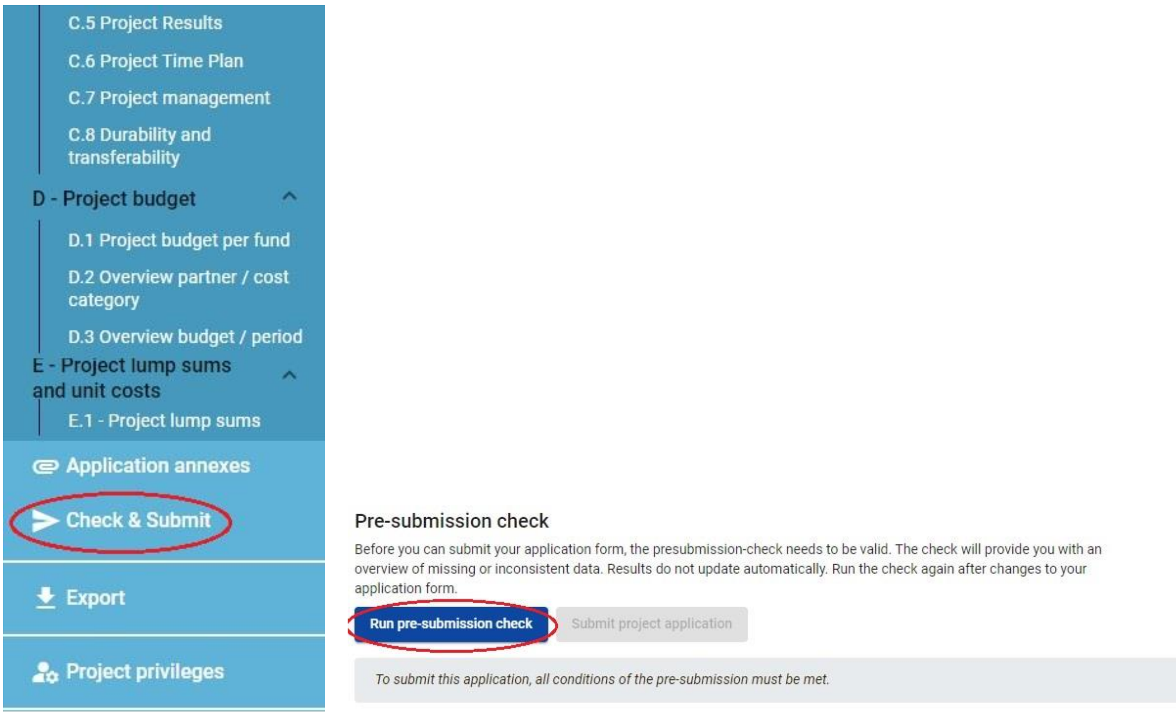
In case a project would apply for preparation costs, which is in the DRP in a form of a lump-sum, you shall indicate that in this section by clicking on E.1 in the left menu, then on the “+ Add” button and in the table opened up select “preparation cost” from the drop-down list.

<u>The lump sum for preparation costs shall be added manually only in the LP’s budget and shall not be split between partners.</u>

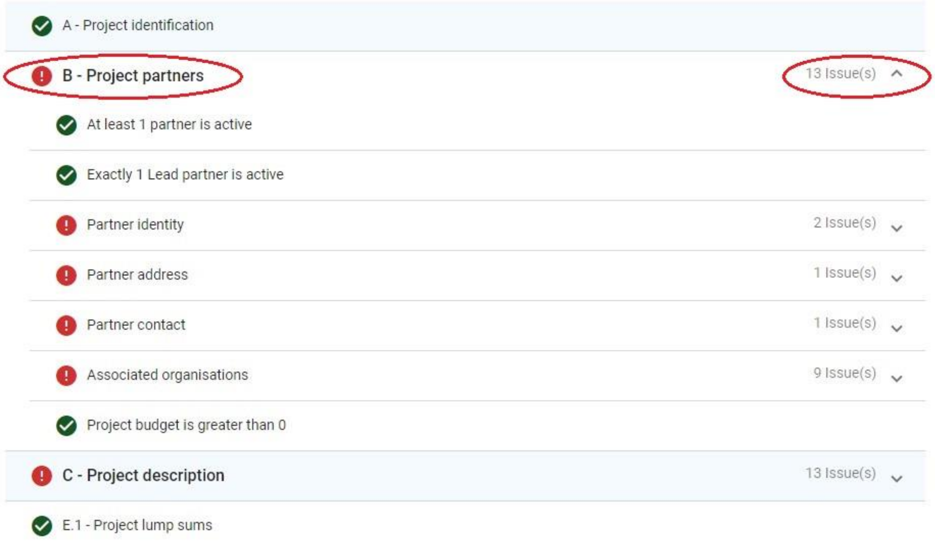


VI. Checks and submission of the Expression of Interest

Before the submission of the EoI, it is to be validated by pre-submission check. The check will provide an overview of missing data. Since results do not update automatically, applicants need to run the check each time after changes are made to the EoI.

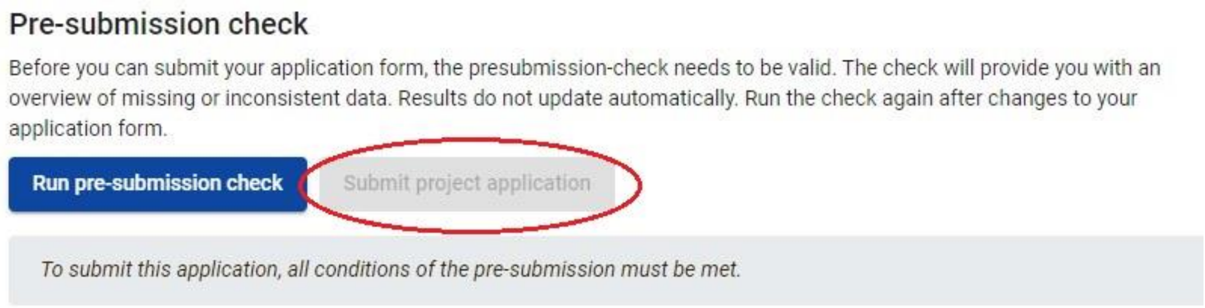


In order to submit your application, all conditions of the pre-submission check must be met by correcting or completing the incorrect, or missing data / field.

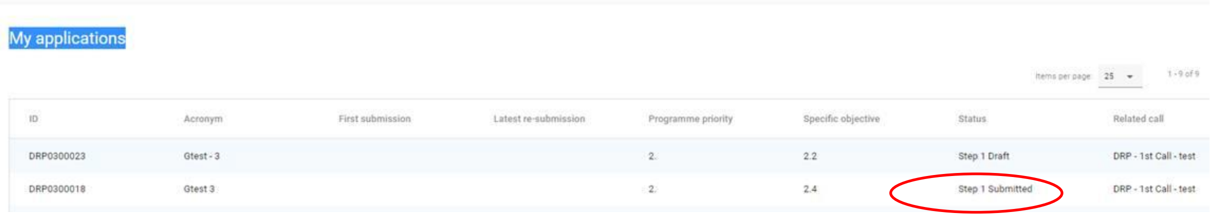


Please note that a successful pre-submission check is no guarantee that an application is fully complete and formally compliant! Pre-submission checks include verification of mandatory fields and conditions.

When all sections and fields are valid the „Submit project application" button will be enabled and the EoI thus can be submitted.



The system does not send an automatic confirmation email about the submission. You can check the status of your application in the "my applications" section. If the project is submitted then in Status section "Step 1 Submitted" will be indicated.



Export function

This section allows the user to export and download the EoI (pdf file) and partner budget tables (xls file).