Guidelines for filling in the AF

1st Call for Proposals

April 24, 2023

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Foreword

These guidelines present the main technical requirements and steps for filling in and submitting an Application form (AF) for the DRP 2nd step of 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 Application Pack for 2nd step of 1st CfP including its Annexes. The Applicants Manual is also containing further (practical) information on content-related elements for 1st Call (such as mandatory/optional objectives, activities, outputs and deliverables) and on methodological aspects (e.g. output and result indicators), therefore it should be considered complementary to these 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 submission of Application Form (AF) is the second step in applying for funding within the first Call for Proposals (CfP) of the Danube Region Programme.

The Application Pack for the second step consists of:

➢ Danube Region Programme (DRP) document (IP)

➢ DRP 1st Call announcement 2nd step

➢ DRP Applicants Manual (version 1.1, publication date: 24.04.2023)

➢ Manual on Eligibility of Expenditure (version 1.1, publication date: 24.04.2023)

➢ Guidelines for filling in the AF (24.04.2023)

➢ State Aid Declaration

➢ Declaration of pre-financing and co-financing statement

➢ Declaration of Interest for Associated Strategic Partner (ASP)

➢ Declaration of International Organisations

➢ Partnership Agreement (PA) template

➢ Subsidy Contract (SC) template

The Application Form (AF) is to be submitted electronically together with the other relevant documents via Jems (electronic monitoring system of the DRP). Please, consider that **all applicants must submit** the **Partnership Agreement,** the **Co-financing and State Aid Declarations**, while ASP Declarations and Declaration of International Organisations are to be submitted only if it is the case.

The **deadline** for submission of the Application Form and its Annexes for the 1st call for proposals is **specified in the Call Announcement and in the letter of invitation to the 2nd step.**

I.   Jems Technical requirements

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.

The Lead Applicants invited in the second step shall access Jems using the same email address and password as in case of the EoI submission. The LA can add further users that can edit the application but these users cannot submit the AF.

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-europe.eu.

All the data already filled in during the submission of the EoI is kept and can be further modified/improved at this stage in line also with DRP MA/JS recommendations. However, **main characteristics of the project's intervention logic** as outlined in the EoI **must not be modified** in the AF.

II. Creating the Application Form and applying for the 1st DRP call/2nd step

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview on how to fill in all applicable parts of the AF.

Before starting filling in the AF, please carefully consider the following.

> - **AFs shall be submitted within the deadline** indicated in the Call Announcement. Applicants are advised not to submit the AF at the very last moment as the Jems system may not be able to process a high number of submissions in a short time, thus causing delays resulting in late submission, i.e. after the set deadline.

> - Only the **AFs submitted through the Jems** in accordance with these Guidelines shall be considered for assessment.

> - Only **AFs written in English** shall be considered for assessment.

> - The partnership consists of **at least three financing partners from at least three participating countries** of which at least one is located in a Member State.

> - The Lead Applicant fulfils the **LA eligibility requirements**.

> - At least 3 joint cooperation levels are indicated.

> - The **main characteristics** of the **project intervention logic** as outlined in the AF have **not been modified** compared to the one outlined in the EoI.

- ➢ The **Lead Applicant** has **not been changed** between the two steps (i.e. EoI vs. AF).

- ➢ The maximum number of **financing partners that can be changed** (by withdrawal or withdrawal with replacement) between the two steps (i.e. EoI vs. AF) is **four**.

- ➢ There is no limitation for including new financing partners or ASPs.

- ➢ The **Partnership Agreement** is complete and signed by all directly financed partners.

- ➢ The financed partners fulfil the requirements set in Part 2, section II of the Applicants Manual.

- ➢ The **documents** (Declaration of pre-financing, Declaration of co-financing, State Aid declaration, Declaration for International organisations – if applicable and Declaration of Interest for Associated Strategic Partner – if applicable) are **filled in and signed by the partner**.

III.   User management

The lead applicant (LA) can grant access rights for opening the application form to the project partners or collaborators. In order to receive access rights a person 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:
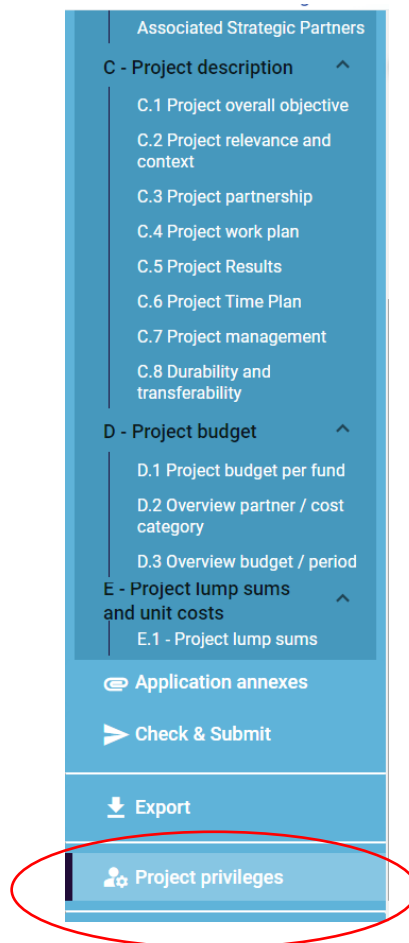
Users can be granted either:

- **read-only rights** ("view") – a user can access all the AF sections without being in the position of making any change

- **edit rights** ("edit") – a user can modify/fill in all the AF sections

- **lead applicant rights** ("manage") – a user has both edit rights, but also access to the management of the "Project privileges" section.
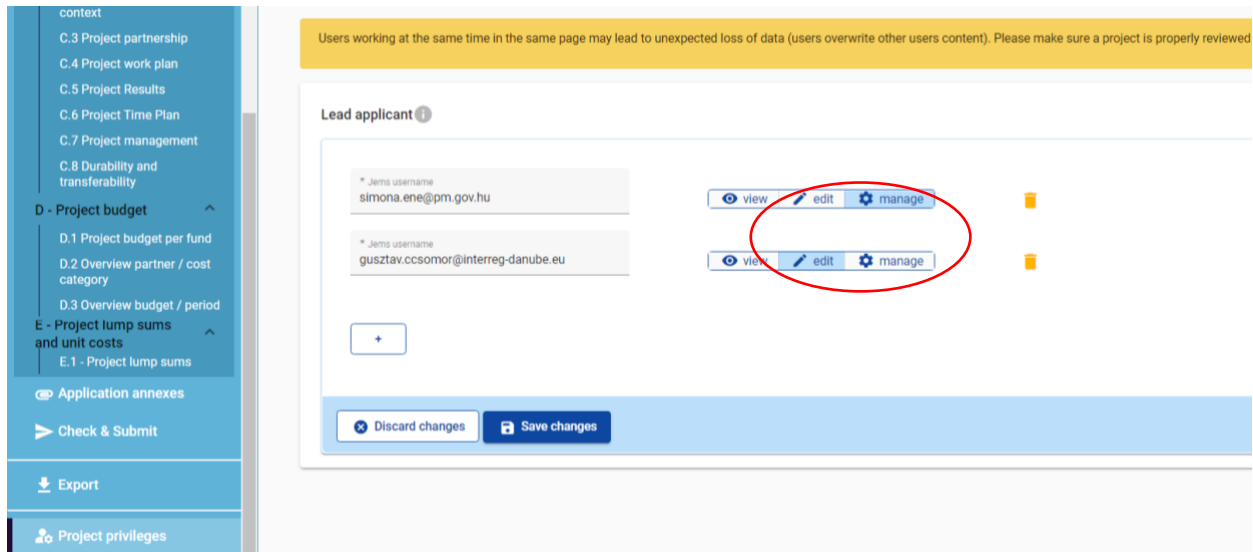
Only users with "manage" rights can submit the Application Form.

ATTENTION:

It is possible for different users to work at the same time on the same AF. 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**. Consequenty coordinating who is working when in the AF is crucial for a smooth use of Jems during the application phase.

If the EoI was selected for invitation for the second step, the application is available again for the Lead Applicant for modification and submission.

The user accounts created to draft and submit the application will be available until the deadline of the call.

In case the project is selected for funding, a new set of privileges will be created for every project partner.
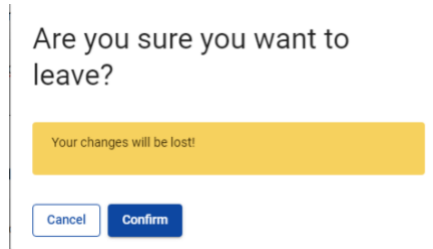
IV.   Filling in the AF

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview on how to fill in all applicable parts of the AF.

The "Project overview" page offers general information on the proposal, its application status and the running call. Every application has a version number. When opened for the second step the project version number is set to "V.2.0" 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 AF template.

The "trash" 🗑 icon allows the LA to delete. 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 AF. Always remember to save data before leaving a section of the AF in order to avoid losing information.

When filling in the AF:

➢ 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 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 would be lost!

Section A – Project identification

The data previously included in the EoI is available for editing in case it is necessary.

Please **do not change the acronym** of the project!

Please make sure that the **project duration** does **not exceed 30 months**!

Section B – Project partners

The LP/PPs/ASPs already entered in the first step are already included and their data can be updated, if required (e.g. change of contact details and/ or legal representatives).

On the **Partners overview** page the partnership can be revised, either by deleting a PP by clicking the   icon, or adding new ones. by clicking the "Add new partner" button:
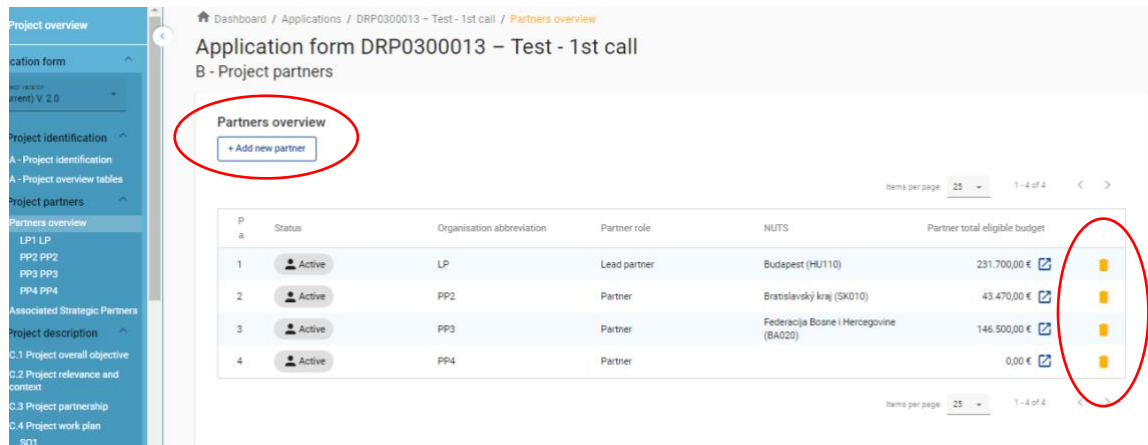
When opening the Add new partner section in the upper part the LA can see several tabs which have to be filled in for each partner.

The first three tabs refer to the identification of the LP/PP, data related to address, contact details, contact persons. The LA should fill in all the requested information.

Tab "budget"

Please note that before starting to fill in the budget, please 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.

The "Partner budget" section covers six cost categories: staff costs, office and administration costs, travel and accommodation costs, external expertise, services costs, equipment and Infrastructure and works costs.
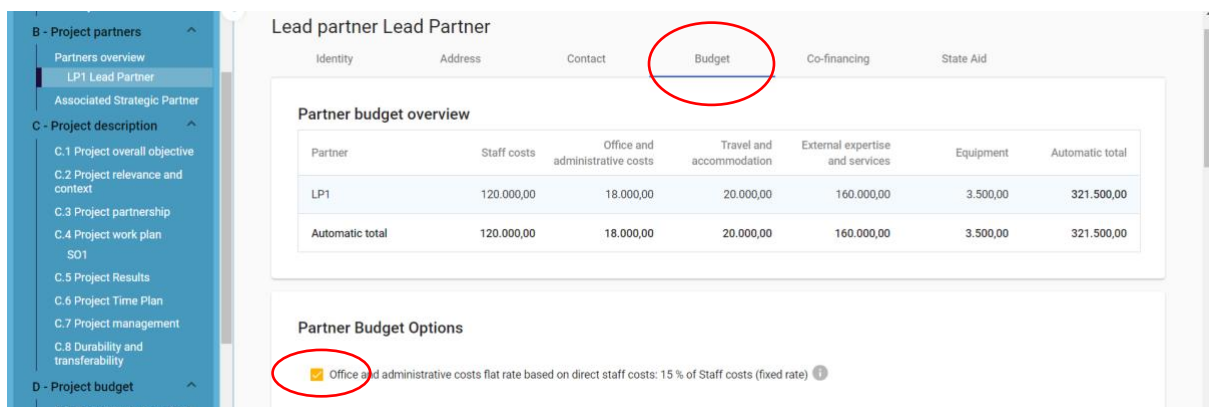
First the applicant should select the **flat rate option of 15% for Office and administration**.

The LAs and project partners have the possibility for <u>Staff costs</u> category to choose between real costs or 20% flat rate of direct costs other than staff costs. Each LA and project partner must choose one of these reimbursement options in the final application form; the selected method has to remain unchanged through the entire project period.

The LAs and project partners have the possibility to choose between real costs or 15% flat rate (calculated based on staff costs) for Travel and accommodation. The programme strongly encourages the LAs and project partners to choose the 15% flat for calculation of the travel and accommodation costs. Each LA and project partner must choose one of these reimbursement options in the final application form; the selected method has to remain unchanged through the entire project period.

Skipping this very first step will affect the further partner budget elaboration - the selected flat rate impacts on the automatic calculation done by the system under "Partner budget". Detailed information on budget options and flat rates can be found in the **Manual on Eligibility of expenditure**. Flat rates are pre-defined in the Jems; the flat rate amounts are automatically calculated on basis of total real costs category and visible in separate tables under "Partner budget".

In order to define the budget per cost category the applicant has to click under each cost category the "+Add" button, and insert the total amount of the partner budget part as well as allocate this amount per periods (the periods will automatically appear based on the total duration defined in section A).

The amount entered in the column "Total amount of cost category" must match the sum of the amounts entered per periods. The "Gap" column amount (right end of the table) should be "0" as this calculates the differences between the total amount per costs category and the sum of the amounts per period. In case there are mismatches between the two above mentioned columns a warning message appears in yellow:

In case a PP plans also **Equipment budget**, for cost category Equipment, in the "Description" field **each type of equipment planned to be purchased shall be listed separately**, adding separate rows for each type of items by clicking on the "+" button under the "Description" column. For each line, please enter the planned cost amount of the respective equipment in the total column, as well as in the period column relevant.

Please note, that except for the cost category Equipment, the total amount of cost category shall be inserted only in one row for each cost category. Option for adding more rows, button "+" shall not be used in case of other cost categories.

Please, note that the total investment expenditure can be divided among different cost categories. The cost category 'Infrastructure and works' should only cover costs related to investment having the nature of infrastructure or works and not included under any other cost category.

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.

Tab "state aid"

In the state aid tab the applicant can select the activities that are relevant for state aid, if any. If no activity is state aid relevant the section shall be left empty.

Tab "Motivation"

First the thematic and territorial competences and experiences of the LA/ project partner have to be filled in. Afterwards the role in the project has to be described as well as the proportion (%) of the total partner budget to be allocated for project management activities. In case of the LP the organisation's experience in participating in and/or managing EU co-financed projects or other international projects has to be described

proving the existence of the resources (human and financial) necessary for project implementation.

Associated strategic partners (ASPs)

Associated strategic partners can be added, or deleted as well by either clicking "Add new associated strategic partner" button, or the 🗑 icon next to the respective ASP:
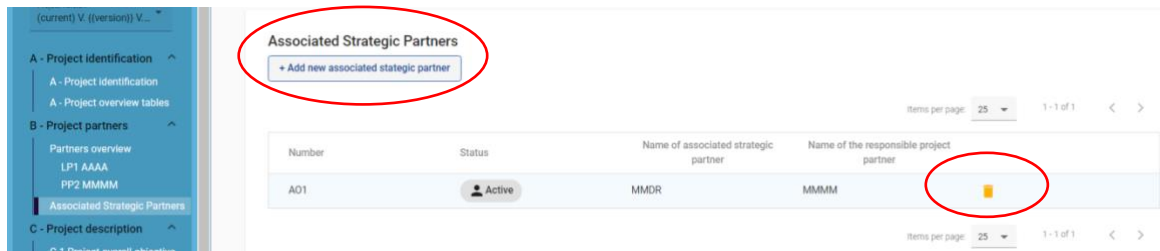
Once added the applicant has to fill in the data of the ASP in terms of organisation data, selecting the LP/PP supporting the ASP, legal representative, contact person and the role of the ASP in the project.

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.

Please note, that in all the section marked "Not applicable" (which might relate only to PAC, or DSP call) the applicant should include in the text field "N/A".

C.1 Project overall objective

This section is already filled in based on previously inserted data and is not supposed to be modified unless the MA/JS recommends improvement.

C.2 Project relevance and context

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 and in relation to the project topic. The applicant should focus on describing the status quo in the field addressed by the proposal, in the territories covered by the proposal providing concrete data, explaining also what already exists (e.g. due to

previously implemented projects, initiatives) and what concretely is needed additionally. The text described in the EoI can be further improved.

Sub-section C.2.2 How does the project tackle the identified common challenges and/or opportunities and what is new and innovative about the approach the project takes?

Main measures, work-steps and approaches shall be described on how to tackle the above mentioned needs and challenges. Applicants are requested to explain the link between the identified needs and challenges and the project main and specific objectives as defined in the project intervention logic (objectives, activities, outputs, results) defined in sub-section C.4 and following. The coherence of the project intervention logic (projects main and specific objectives, activities, outputs and results) with the programme intervention logic (specific objectives, outputs and results) is a pre-condition for a project to be funded under DRP, so please read part II.7. of Applicants Manual carefully.

Applicants shall provide a consistent presentation to demonstrate how the planned outputs and the ultimate project result are achievable by following a logical sequence and combination of activities as well as a certain set of well-established and commonly agreed methods. Innovative approaches are highly recommended while defining the project methodology.

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

Applicants shall describe in detail why the transnational cooperation is needed to address and tackle the identified needs and challenges. Applicants shall explain why the project objectives cannot be efficiently reached acting only on a national/regional/local level and describe what benefits the project partners/target groups/ project area/DRP area gain in taking a transnational approach. Please read the "How to develop a transnational project" guide carefully. The text described in the EoI can be further improved.

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

Please read carefully the guidance provided for this sub-section in JEMS. 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 benefit from the project.

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

Sub-section C.2.5 – How does the project contribute to wider policies and strategies

In this sub-section Applicants shall select the relevant strategy from a drop down menu, the contribution to it can be described. Contributions to other strategies / policies shall be described – if relevant – through adding ([+] -button) one or more of the pre-defined options or in the field "other".

Sub-section C.2.6 Which synergies with past or current EU and other projects or initiatives will the project make use of?

In case synergic activities with other past or ongoing projects or initiatives are planned, Applicants are requested to describe how these activities will complement each other and explain the added value of the expected result.

C.2.7 How does the project build on available knowledge?

Applicants are requested to define all those previous projects or initiatives that they intend to capitalise on, describing what exactly is to be capitalised (in terms of outputs, results) as well the added value brought by the current project proposal.

Section C.3 Project Partnership

The description previously included in the EoI is available for editing in case it is necessary.

Section C.4 – Project work plan

The data previously included in the EoI is available for editing in case additional elements or more detailed description is needed to be added or other modifications need to be performed based on the MA/ JS recommendations.

The LA's should add the budget of each activity in the description part.

In case of activities description section please be aware that the character limit has been increased to 3.000.

Compared to the EoI the applicant has the possibility now to add the list of PPs involved in the respective activity by clicking on the Partner(s) involved field and selecting the relevant PP(s).

Additionally, for each project activity, deliverables are to be defined, including the title, a short and concrete description as well as the delivery period. Please note that the application cannot be submitted (at pre-submission check phase) in case the Partner(s) involved field is not filled in, or at least one deliverable is not added to each activity.

In case recommended so by the MA/JS, SOs and their investment, activity, output parts can be deleted by the icon in the respective section.

Section C.5 Project Results

The description previously included in the EoI is available for editing in case it is necessary and/ or recommended by the MA/ JS.

Compared to the EoI the applicant has to add the delivery period for each result.

Section C.6 Project Time Plan

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

C.7 Project Management

The applicant shall provide first a description on the project coordination as well as on the proposed management structures that will be set up for the project management (e.g. steering groups, or advisory boards etc.). Additionally, a description on how internal communication inside the project will be set up is to be provided.

Second, the applicant shall describe also how the quality assurance of the project outputs will be ensured (e.g. if external experts will be used or internal staff, paying attention to secure the independence of the quality assurance manager).

The applicant shall describe who will coordinate project communication and how will he/she ensure the involvement of all partners, highlighting also how the communication function will contribute to transfer the project results. Special attention should be paid to the mandatory communication requirements that should be met. Please note that all communication activities should be included in the different specific objectives, as an integral part of your project. There is no need to repeat this information here.

Last but not least the financial managment of the project shall be described, including responsibilities, monitoring of the spending forecast and financial flows, project transfers and related claims. The applicant should also underline what kind of measures will be taken in case of delays.

The cooperation criteria and horizontal principles sections are already filled in from the EoI and are open for editing in case necessary. For updating, improving 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.

C.8 Durability and transferability

Only sub-section C.8.2 and C.8.3 is applicable. For section C.8.1 please, enter the text "N/A" in the field, otherwise the system will not allow the submission of the AF.

Applicants shall provide here answers to the questions regarding the durability and transferability of the project by describing the measures taken during the project implementation to ensure durability of project outputs and their transferability and applicability to other organisations/ bodies/ countries. If applicable, the role of the ASPs in ensuring the durability and transferability has to be described in this section as well. Durability refers to the long lasting effects of the projects outputs including their further valorisation. The section should also tackle the sustainability of the project outputs and its three dimensions:

➢ **Financial sustainability** - financing of follow up activities, leverage of funds etc.

➢ **Institutional sustainability** - "ownership" of project outputs - which structures will ensure and how, the results of the project to continue to be in place after the project end?

➢ **Political sustainability** - what structural impact will the project have? – e.g., will it lead to improved policies, legislation, plans, codes of conduct, methods, etc.?

Transferability refers to the potential to use/ apply the outputs of the projects in other regions or in different contexts.

Section E.1 Project lump sums

This section indicates the data entered in the EoI, or it is possible to fill it in, in case the project would apply for preparation costs, but not filled in so far. Preparation costs in the DRP is in a form of lump-sum and it shall be indicated in this section by clicking on **E.1 – project lump-sums** in the left menu, then on the "+ Add" button and in the table opened up select "preparation cost" from the drop-down list.

Additionally, the full amount of lump sum for preparation costs shall be added manually only in the LP's budget column in the table and shall not be split between partners.

Section Application Annexes

The section annexes is dedicated to upload the documents that are required with the submission of the application form for each project partner, including the lead partner, i.e. signed and scanned declaration of co-financing, state aid declaration, LP confirmation, as well as ASP declaration (if relevant), Declaration for International Organizations (if relevant), Partnership Agreement.
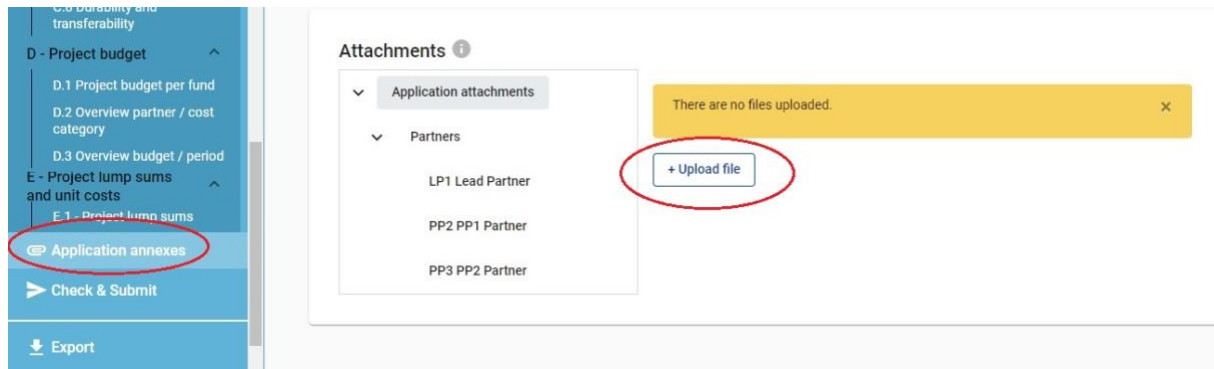
To upload a file first select the relevant section (e.g. application attachment or a specific partner) and click on „Upload file". After your upload is done further actions can be done if needed such as edit description, download file and delete file.
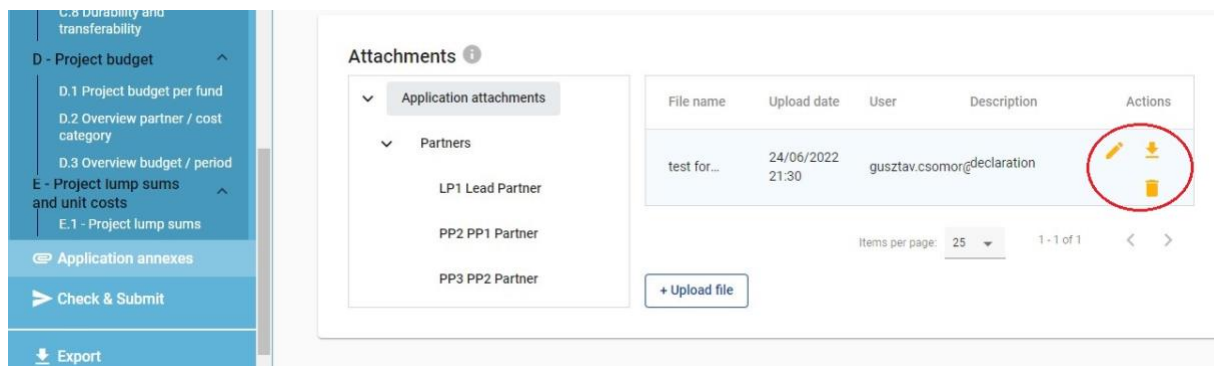
V.   Checks and submission of the Application Form

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

In order to submit your application, all conditions of the pre-submission check must be met by correcting or completeing 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.

Applicants are recommended to run the pre-submission check function during the preparation of the AF and not only before the submission in order to identify in time missing fields and inconsistencies, which would not allow the submission, allowing sufficient time to complete and correct the errors indicated by the system!

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

Export function

This section allows the user to export and download the application form (pdf file) and partner budgets (xls file).