Interreg
NEXT MED
Co-funded by the European Union

Interreg NEXT MED Programme

Guide for project preparation

Table of contents

Introduction 3
List of acronyms 4
Chapter 1: Interreg NEXT MED Programme in a nutshell 5
Chapter 2: Project Cycle Management 6
2.1 Introduction to Project Cycle Management 6
2.2 Partnership Building 7
Chapter 3: Identifying a Problem or Opportunity 8
Chapter 4: Developing a Project Proposal 9
4.1 The Logical Framework Matrix 9
4.1.1 Elements of the Logical Framework Matrix 9
4.1.2 Interreg NEXT MED and the projects 11
4.1.3 The indicators of the logical framework matrix 13
4.2 Development of the work plan and distribution of tasks 14
4.3 Preparation of a budget 16
Chapter 5: How to build a strong project proposal 17
5.1 General advice 17
5.2 Example Sheets 18
5.2.1 Project intervention logic: example of thematic sheets 20
Chapter 6: Monitoring activities 27

Introduction

Applying for a call for proposals can be a complex and challenging process. In order to increase the chances of success, it is important to understand the methodology of conceiving and drafting a good project proposal and an adequate logical framework. This guide is designed to provide the most relevant information and tools to develop a proposal that meets the basic requirements of the Interreg NEXT MED first call for proposals

Following the steps outlined in this document will not ensure the approval of the proposal, however, it may improve its overall quality.

Disclaimer: this guide provides general information for developing a project proposal under the Interreg NEXT MED Programme. Applicants are invited to consult the specific Terms of Reference of the calls, the Guidelines, and the Application Form for a complete understanding of how to design the project intervention logic.

List of acronyms

EU	European Union
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LFM	Logical Framework Matrix
MPC	Mediterranean Partner Countries
MSMEs	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PEST	Political, Economic, Socio-cultural and Technological
R&I	Research and Innovation
RACER	Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy to monitor and Robust
RCO	REGIO Common Outputs
RSO	REGIO Specific Objective
SMEs	Small & Medium Enterprises
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TOWS	Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Strengths
WP	Work Package

Chapter 1: Interreg NEXT MED Programme in a nutshell

The first step in conceiving and drafting a good project proposal is to thoroughly understand the overall goals and objectives of the Interreg NEXT MED Programme, as well as the specific requirements and criteria that will be used to evaluate proposals. Carefully reading the Programme Document, designed jointly by the 15 participating countries and approved by the European Commission, is a prerequisite to understand the specific context and needs of the cooperation area, as well as the thematic priorities selected in response to the identified shared challenges.

Interreg NEXT MED Programme covers over 100 eligible territories of 15 countries: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Türkiye. It is implemented under the transnational strand of the European Territorial Cooperation goal, and it builds on the positive experiences of over 15 years of cross-border cooperation under the ENPI and ENI CBC Med Programmes.

Interreg NEXT MED Programme aims to boost transnational Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and strives to further contribute to the growth of the Mediterranean basin by strengthening partnerships, fostering policy discussions and collaborative responses to global challenges, supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals within the Agenda 2030, aligning with the New European Agenda for the Mediterranean, prioritizing cooperation as outlined by the European Neighbourhood Policy, and aligning with EU bilateral cooperation programs established with neighbouring countries.

With a budget of €263 million, Interreg NEXT MED aims to contribute to smart, sustainable, fair development for all across the Mediterranean basin by supporting balanced, long-lasting, far-reaching cooperation and multilevel governance. Through a broad participative process involving institutions, private and non-State entities from all the concerned territories, the participating countries have identified the four following priorities (see box 1), based on the strategic framework contained in Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (Common Provisions Regulation).

- **A more competitive and smarter Mediterranean** by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation through Research and Innovation (R&I), sustainable growth and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) competitiveness to help reduce disparities and contribute to socioeconomic integration;
- **A greener, low-carbon and resilient Mediterranean** supporting the transition towards a net zero carbon economy by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- **A more social and inclusive Mediterranean** to provide learning opportunities, ensure equal opportunities and socio-economic integration and also to improve access to health care through the use of digitalization and technological innovation;
- **A better cooperation governance for the Mediterranean** by promoting joint activities for knowledge sharing, enhancing cooperation with partners and the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders.

Box 1: Interreg NEXT MED priorities

The project proposal must be written in a coherent manner and focused on a specific aspect of these themes. In doing so, it is strongly recommended to also consider horizontal principles such as respect for fundamental rights, promotion of gender equality, prevention of discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, promotion of sustainable development and contribution to just transition, and to be in line with the national laws and regulations of the participating countries.

Chapter 2: Project Cycle Management

2.1 Introduction to Project Cycle Management

In the early 1990s, the European Commission adopted 'Project Cycle Management' (PCM) as its main project design and management tool, with the aim of establishing consistent processes and enhancing the overall quality of project lifecycles. Over the years, the fundamental concepts have not changed substantially, apart from perhaps the evolution of the terminology used[1].

Generally, all project management methodologies imply a flow cycle with phases, the end of one phase should become the beginning of another. Figure 1 shows the schematisation of the PCM adapted to the context of the Interreg NEXT MED.

[1] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/methodology-aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-200403_en.pdf

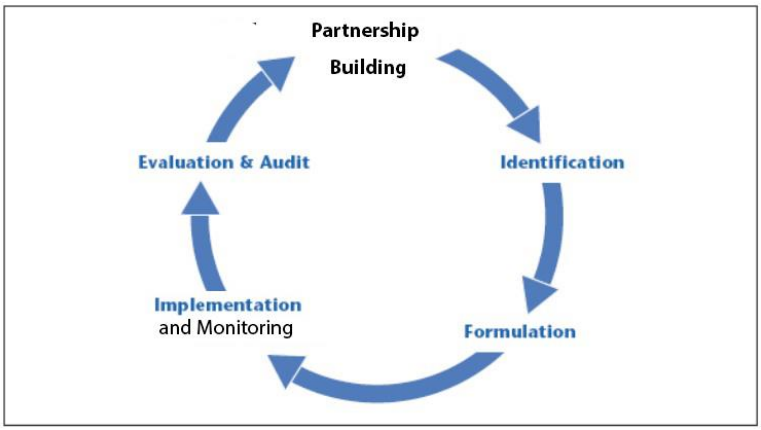

Figure 1: Project cycle

As stated in the introduction, this document mainly aims to provide information on the development of a good quality proposal; therefore, the last two steps of the PCM, namely 'Implementation and Monitoring' and 'Evaluation and Audit', will only be covered to emphasise the importance of developing a proper work plan and monitoring system.

2.2 Partnership Building

In the context of Interreg NEXT MED, partnership-building is a crucial aspect that strongly influences the entire process of developing a good project proposal. It is important to establish solid partnerships with the other project partners, the creation of the partnership being the result of a collaborative process that has been ideally consolidated over the years, or at least builds on prior experience and on strong cross-border and transnational mutual intentions.

A strong partnership allows for effective communication, collaboration, and coordination of efforts, which can lead to better, more ambitious project goals. Additionally, partnerships can bring together a diverse range of skills, expertise and resources, which can be beneficial in tackling complex issues and achieving project goals. A strong partnership also promotes transparency, accountability, and mutual trust, which are essential for building a sustainable, prosperous, long-lasting relationship between partners, an objective at the very heart of the Interreg NEXT MED Programme.

Moreover, it is recommended to promote participative process for the elaboration of the proposal. The design of the project should not be a solely responsibility of the lead partner, the other project partners should play a relevant role, as well as other stakeholders such as external actors and beneficiaries whenever possible. This will help to ensure that the project meets the needs of the target groups and territories involved, and that the decisions made reflect the interests of the various stakeholders involved.

The Interreg NEXT MED Programme encourages the creation of cross-border partnerships, for which tools for sharing project ideas may be available, thus facilitating matchmaking with other organisations interested in developing similar ideas. In fact, due to the transnational dimension of the Programme, each partner's contribution will be carefully evaluated when assessing proposals. As a programme operating under principles of cooperation and partnership, the role of every partner must be defined according to the principles of co-responsibility and transversal ownership.

Chapter 3: Identifying a Problem or Opportunity

In order to identify the specific problem or opportunity to address, it is advisable to follow the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) which will help to define adequately the project objectives and the activities that will be implemented to reach them. The LFA is a project planning and management tool, it is commonly used in the development and humanitarian sectors for project design and monitoring and evaluation purposes. The LFA has two primary phases, Analysis and Planning, which are completed in a step-by-step manner during the Identification and Formulation phases of the project cycle.

During the Analysis Stage, the current situation is analysed in order to formulate a vision for the desired future state, and to determine the strategies that should be applied to reach it. The main idea behind the LFA is that projects and programmes are designed to address problems faced by the target group and their needs and interests. In the Planning Stage, the objectives of the analysis are transformed into a practical and actionable plan. In this stage, the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) is created, which requires further analysis and refinement of ideas, activities, and where resource requirements are specified and scheduled, and a budget is developed. This stage will be analysed furthermore in the next section.

The Analysis Stage consists in identifying a clear problem or opportunity that the proposed project intends to address; this problem or opportunity must be in line with the objectives of the funding programme and the specific priorities and objectives outlined in the call for proposals. It generally takes into consideration four elements: Stakeholder Analysis, Problem Analysis (an assessment of reality), Objectives Analysis (a depiction of an improved future situation), and Strategy Analysis (an evaluation of different options to address a given situation).

It is advisable to conduct research to identify relevant issues or challenges in the field, territory or community that the project will target. This may involve reviewing existing literature, consulting with experts or stakeholders, or conducting surveys or interviews with potential beneficiaries. The information gathered from the research must be used to define the problem or opportunity in a clear and concise manner; this should include a detailed description of the issue, as well as its causes and consequences. Another relevant aspect to keep in mind is to properly identify and describe the target population or community that are affected by the problem or opportunity.

Several tools are available for carrying out context analysis. Among them, one tool that could enhance the depth of the analysis is the SWOT analysis of the problem or opportunity. SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to assess the Strengths (**S**), Weaknesses (**W**), Opportunities (**O**) and Threats (**T**) related to the problem or opportunity that will be the focus of the project proposal. The purpose of a SWOT analysis is to identify the main internal and external factors that can positively or negatively influence the success of a project, so that the relevant information can be used to make informed and strategic decisions. This information should be used to develop a clear project concept that addresses the problem or opportunity in a meaningful way. The project concept should include a brief summary of the project's main objectives and activities; it will form the basis for the rest of the proposal and will be used to guide the development of the logical framework matrix. It is worth considering that other design thinking tools are available, such as the TOWS approach; while

SWOT analysis emphasises the internal environment (strengths and weaknesses), TOWS analysis forces one to look first at the external environment (threats and opportunities). Another option is the PEST (political, economic, socio-cultural and technological) analysis, which takes into account other external factors and is more oriented towards the market or a potential new business.

Chapter 4: Developing a Project Proposal

After identifying the problem or opportunity to be addressed, a detailed project proposal must be developed that is well aligned with the objectives of the funding programme and is also feasible and impactful. The project proposal should include a description of the project's objectives and activities. Also be sure to identify as precisely as possible the target groups and final beneficiaries will be affected by the project and the specific problem or opportunity it addresses. At the same time, it is essential to quantify the number of target groups and final beneficiaries as accurately as possible.

In the Planning Stage, the findings from the previous Analysis Stage are transformed into an operational plan that is ready for implementation. This stage is divided into three distinct phases: Creation of the LFM; Development of the work plan, which outlines the timeline (showing the scheduling of each activity) and the allocation of resources; Preparation of the budget.

It is important to also consider the feasibility and sustainability of the project idea. Feasibility refers to the technical and operational aspects of the project, such as the availability of resources and the ability to implement the proposed activities. Sustainability refers to the long-term impact and benefits of the project, such as whether the project will continue to have an impact after the funding period has ended.

4.1 The Logical Framework Matrix

4.1.1 Elements of the Logical Framework Matrix

The vertical intervention logic of the LFM consists of four main elements: Overall Objective, Specific Objective and Expected Results, Outputs and the project Activities. As per Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) definition, the Overall Objective is the broader, long-term change to which the action contributes at regional (transnational), country, or sector level, in the political, social, economic and environmental global context which will stem from interventions of all relevant actors and stakeholders. The Expected Results and the Specific Objective is the main medium-term effect of the intervention focusing on behavioural and institutional changes beneficial to the target group and resulting from the related outputs of the project.

As per OECD-DAC definition Outputs are “the products, capital goods and services which results from development interventions”, they should be linked to corresponding Specific Objective through clear numbering. They should also include changes resulting from the action which are relevant to the achievement of Specific Objective; these changes relate to improved capacities, abilities, skills of a group of people and are generated by the action. The Outputs are under control of the intervention; on the other hand, the Expected Results and the Specific Objective is under control of the final beneficiaries, which mean that is not

under the direct control of the project management. Finally, the Project Activities are what the intervention does to produce the Output, and consequently, to attain the Objectives of the project (Utilisation of resources).

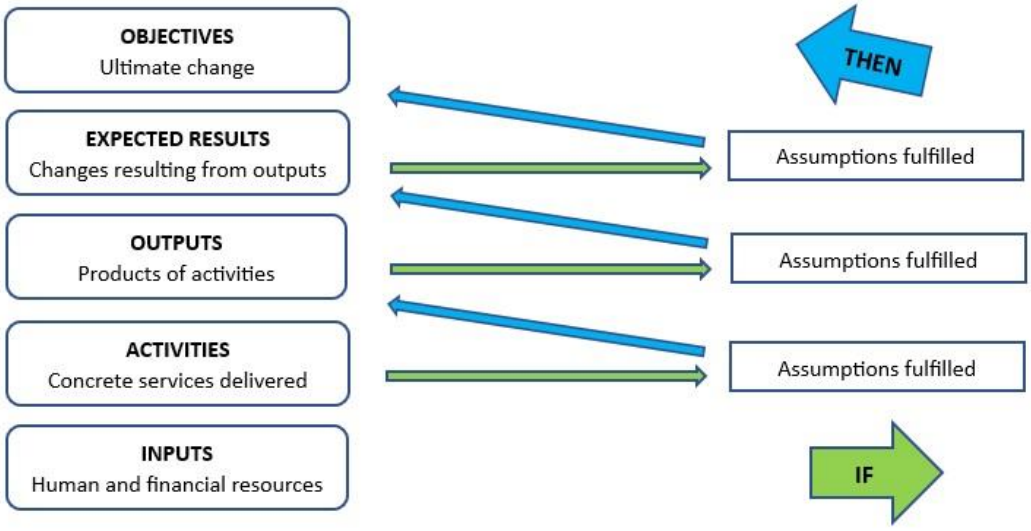

Figure 2: Logical links between the element of the vertical intervention logic and the assumptions

The LFM is a logical and sequential tool that helps to ensure that the project activities and outputs are aligned with the Expected Results, the Specific Objective and the Overall Objective, and that the element of the intervention logic are realistic and achievable. It also helps to facilitate clear communication between project stakeholders, and to monitor and evaluate the progress and success of the project.

The results chain is a diagram depicting a causal pathway of change; it aims at representing the hierarchy of project strategic priorities and covers the element of the vertical intervention logic; it clearly lays out the logical link between the project Activities, Outputs, Expected Results, Specific Objective and Overall Objective.

Assumptions are also part of the LFM, these are factors outside the control of project managers that can impact the success and sustainability of a project. These external factors are considered when answering the question, "What external elements may influence the implementation and long-term benefits of a project that cannot be directly controlled by project management?"

The logical relation works as follows:

- once the project Activities have been carried out, and if the Assumptions at this level hold true, Outputs will be achieved;

- once these Outputs and the Assumptions at this level are fulfilled, the Expected Results of the project will be achieved;

- once the Expected Results will be achieved, the Specific Objective is obtained;

- once the Specific Objective has been achieved and the Assumptions at this level are fulfilled, contribution to the achievement of the Overall Objective will have been made by the project.

When drafting the statements to be used as Overall Objective, Specific Objective, Expected Results and Outputs, it is considered good practice to follow some practical shortcuts. For example, the past tense is used to formulate the Outputs, the Expected Results and the Specific Objective, while the infinitive "To..." followed by a verb indicating the nature of the change the project envisages should be used to formulate the Overall Objective. The same statement should not include more than one topic/theme (avoid using any causal within a single statement such as “in order to”, “by”, “through”).

4.1.2 Interreg NEXT MED and the projects

According to the commonly used terminology, a programme is defined as a set of coordinated activities and projects that are designed to achieve a specific development objective or set of objectives. A programme is generally implemented by a group of organisations working together.

Programmes are typically designed to address complex issues or problems that cannot be solved through individual projects alone. They are characterized by a high degree of coordination and coherence, with individual projects working together to achieve a common goal. Programmes may also involve partnerships with governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in order to ensure that their objectives are aligned with local priorities and needs.

As such, Interreg NEXT MED has identified four Policy Objectives in the relevant EU Regulation which are to be considered as Priorities in the context of the Programme (see section 2.2); to each Priority (see box 2) is linked one or more Specific Objectives. As far as projects are concerned, when drafting the proposal, it is highly advisable to limit the number of Specific Objectives of the project to one; if deemed indispensable, a maximum of two Specific Objectives can be identified.

- Priority 1: A more competitive and smarter Mediterranean
Specific objective: RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies
Specific objective: RSO1.3. Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments

- Priority 2: A greener, low-carbon and resilient Mediterranean
Specific objective: RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
Specific objective: RSO2.4. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches
Specific objective: RSO2.5. Promoting access to water and sustainable water management
Specific objective: RSO2.6. Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

- Priority 3: A more social and inclusive Mediterranean
Specific objective: RSO4.2. Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training
Specific objective: RSO4.5. Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care

- Priority 4: A better cooperation governance for the Mediterranean
Specific objective: ISO6.6. Other actions to support better cooperation governance (all strands).

Box 2: Interreg NEXT MED Priorities

There is a symmetry and interlinked connection between Interreg NEXT MED and each funded project, as Interreg NEXT MED aims to achieve its objectives through the funding of individual projects. By working closely with the projects that it funds, Interreg NEXT MED can ensure that its objectives are met effectively and efficiently, while promoting coordination and cooperation between several projects. The success of Interreg NEXT MED ultimately depends on the success of the individual projects it supports, so effective interaction between the programme and the projects is essential. Each project will support the achievement of the Overall Objectives of Interreg NEXT MED programme, as a consequence the Specific Objectives of Interreg NEXT MED will represent the Overall Objectives of the projects it will finance (see figure 3: Symmetry between Interreg NEXT MED Programme and Project Level).

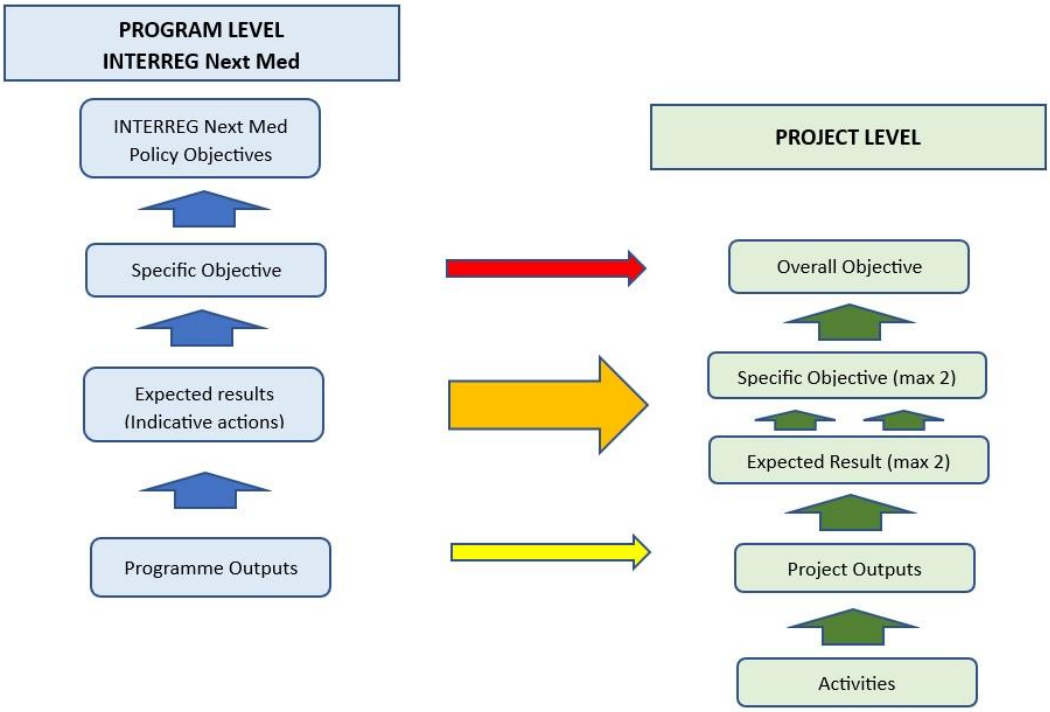

Figure 3: Symmetry between Interreg NEXT MED Programme and Project Level

4.1.3 The indicators of the logical framework matrix

The Objectively Verifiable Indicators (indicators) are quantitative or qualitative measures that are used to assess the project's performance and determine the extent to which the project objectives (Overall and Specific) and Outputs have been achieved, in other words, they are the evidence that enable the implementing partner to measure the progress of a project. According to the EU Project Cycle Management Manual, the meaning of an Objectively Verifiable indicator is that "the information collected should be the same if collected by different people".

The LFM provides a structured framework for organizing and presenting the indicators in a way that is easy to understand and analyse; it enables project managers to make informed decisions and adjustments to the project's activities, ensuring that the project stays on track and remains focused on achieving the set goals.

The indicators in the LFM also play an important role in ensuring accountability and transparency in the project. By providing a clear and measurable picture of the project's progress, the indicators also enable permit to the implementing partner to track the use of project resources and ensure that the project is being implemented as planned.

Indicators also provide a means of communication between project stakeholders, including project staff, beneficiaries, and partners.

Indicators should be independent of each other, each one relating to one element of the intervention logic: in the case of Interreg NEXT MED, the set of output and result indicators is set in the Programme "Performance Framework Methodology Paper" based on a selection of the common indicators provided by the European Commission in Annex I for ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and to the Cohesion Fund,. Indicators should provide simple, verifiable, and reliable means to track changes and performance. To the

extent possible, all indicators should be RACER, which is the acronym of the words Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy to monitor and Robust against manipulation.

- Relevant: the indicator should be closely linked to the element of the intervention logic to be reached, providing a clear and meaningful reflection of the intended goal to measure.
- Accepted: the indicator should be widely accepted and acknowledged by the stakeholders involved in the project. The indicator should be agreed upon by all stakeholders, including project staff, beneficiaries, and partners, to ensure that it is accepted and has broad buy-in. By selecting indicators that are easily understood and agreed upon by all stakeholders, the project can be monitored more effectively and progress can be reported more accurately.
- Credible: meaning that also for non-experts, the definition is unambiguous, clear and easy to interpret
- Easy to monitor: it refers cost-effectiveness of the indicator, when data collection is feasible in terms of costs and time for those in charge of the activity.
- Robust against manipulation: when it is clearly defined and not subject to manipulation.

Box 3: Explanation of RACER acronym

4.2 Development of the work plan and distribution of tasks

The development of a work plan is an important step in the project planning process. It involves creating a comprehensive outline of the project's timeline and resource allocation. The work plan outlines the scheduling of each activity, indicating the start and end dates for each task and their inter-dependencies. This helps to ensure that all activities are carried out in a coordinated and efficient manner, and that the project stays on track.

The resource allocation component of the work plan identifies the specific resources required for each activity, including personnel, materials, equipment, and funding. This information helps project managers to allocate resources effectively, ensuring that the right resources are available when they are needed. By taking into account all the resources required for each activity, the project manager can make informed decisions about how to allocate those resources to achieve the project objectives.

The work plan serves as a roadmap for the project, providing a clear picture of what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and how it will be done and by whom. It helps to ensure that all team members are working towards the same goal and provides a reference point for progress tracking and risk management. A well-developed work plan is critical for project success and should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the project environment.

Interreg NEXT MED adopted a methodology of organisation using the concept of Work Packages (WPs). In a transnational or cross-border project, WPs refer to specific units of work that need to be completed within a certain timeframe. The main purpose of organising work into packages is to break down complex projects into smaller, more manageable components that can be assigned to different teams or individuals. Each work package should be clearly defined, with a specific scope, definition of tasks, timeline, and set of deliverables. It should also have a designated owner who is responsible for ensuring that the

work is completed on time and to the required quality standards. WPs should be organized in a way that makes it easy to track progress, identify dependencies, and manage resources effectively.

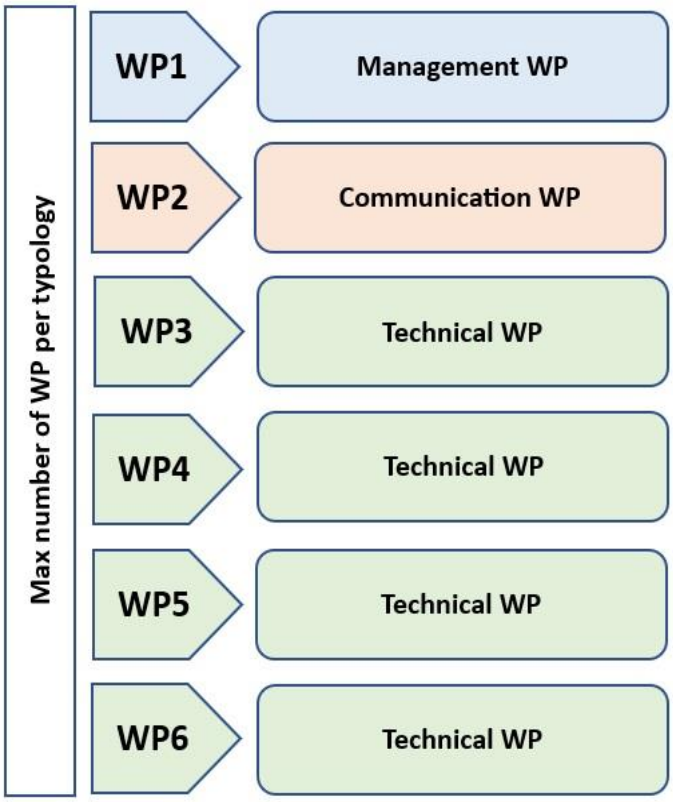

Figure 4: Division of Work Packages

WPs represent a very important approach in implementation, as they constitute a management and operational unit of the project. In the context of Interreg NEXT MED, WPs enable the implementing partners of a project to achieve the Expected Results described as example in the Interreg NEXT MED programme document.

Expected Results are a key component in the development of a project funded by the Interreg NEXT MED programme. The Expected Results, which can be achieved through the successful implementation of a WP, can be considered an intermediate and preparatory step towards the achievement of the project Specific Objective. The number of Expected Results should be one for each Specific Objective, in case of complex project the project Expected results may contain more than one component.

Each Expected Result, depending on its level of complexity, could be achieved through the implementation of one or at most four WPs. That is why the WPs must be consistent with the elements mentioned in the LFM of the proposal (Specific Objective, Outputs and Activities).

When elaborating the WPs, it has to be kept in mind that a maximum of four technical and a maximum of two administrative WPs are allowed. Technical WPs can refer to different levels of intervention, such as the societal level (e.g., capacity building), the technical level (e.g. pilot projects, living lab) and the regulatory level (e.g. policy framework). Administrative WPs mainly concern management, coordination and monitoring activities (WP1) and communication/dissemination (WP2),

It is very important to respect the correspondence between the WPs and the project LFM; the sum of all activities, results and resources (human, financial and technical) appearing in the WPs must coincide with the activities, output, objectives and resources of the project.

		Month											
Work Package	**Responsible**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
Management WP1	Leader	Administration Activities											
Communication WP2	Partner 3		Communication Activities										
Technical WP 3	Leader	Activity 1											
	Partner 1		Activity 2										
	Partner 2			Activity 3									
Technical WP 4	Partner 1		Activity 1										
	Partner 2				Activity 2								
	Partner 3					Activity 3							
Technical WP 5	Leader				Activity 1								
	Partner 1				Activity 2								
	Partner 2							Activity 3					
	Partner 3									Activity 4			
Technical WP 6	Leader						Activity 1						
	Partner 3								Activity 2				

Table 1: Example of GANTT Chart used to organise work packages and plan activities

Reminder

- The best option is to identify only one Specific Project Objective, at most two.
- At least one Expected Result, maximum two, must be identified.
- Only one Expected Result per Specific Objective.
- The best option is to link one Work Package to one Expected Result, at most four.
- Maximum 3 activities should be defined to achieve an output.

Box 4: Number of elements of the proposal

4.3 Preparation of a budget

The preparation of a budget is a crucial step in the project planning process. It involves estimating the costs of all the resources required to complete the project and ensuring that the project is financially feasible. The budget serves as a financial plan for the project and is used to monitor and control the project's spending.

The budget preparation process starts by identifying all the costs associated with the project, including staff costs, travel, infrastructure, equipment, subcontracted costs and administrative costs, following the costs categories listed in the Guidelines for Applicants. For each cost item, an estimate of the amount needed and the timing of the expenses is made. This information is then used to create a comprehensive budget for the project.

In addition to estimating costs, the budget also takes into account any constraints or limitations on the project's funding. This information is used to develop a realistic budget that is aligned with the project's goals and objectives.

The budget is an important tool for project management, and its first source of monitoring, as it helps to ensure that the project stays within its financial constraints. By regularly monitoring the project's spending and comparing it to the budget, the project manager can identify any potential financial problems early on and take corrective action if necessary. The budget also helps to ensure that all project stakeholders have a clear understanding of the project's financial requirements and can make informed decisions about resource allocation.

The budget shall be planned taking into account the pre-financing that the project will receive. From the second pre-financing, the level of expenditures reported is crucial. Therefore, the proper budget should take into account the cash flow and the need to properly plan the timing of the expenditures.

Chapter 5: How to build a strong project proposal

5.1 General advice

This step involves putting together all of the information and elements developed in the previous steps into a clear, well-written, and compelling proposal that will effectively communicate the project idea, logical framework, and budget plan to the funding programme, in this case Interreg NEXT MED.

To begin, follow the format and guidelines provided in the call for proposals. As for Interreg NEXT MED, the proposal must be written in an online platform, filling in the dedicated sections.

However, it is a good practice to prepare in advance an executive summary, project description, logical framework, budget, and elaboration of the Work Packages before entering the platform to submit the proposal. To this regard, an offline version of the Application Form will be made available.

In the executive summary, provide a brief overview of the project idea, its objectives, and a summary of the main activities. This section should be concise and clear, and should capture the reader's attention. In the project description, provide a detailed explanation of the project idea, including the problem or opportunity it addresses, the target population or community, and the specific objectives and activities. The LFM must be aligned with the project description; it must be provided a detailed explanation of the logical link between the project objective, activities, and indicators. In the budget plan, provide a detailed breakdown of all the costs associated with the project, including personnel, equipment, and other expenses. In the implementation plan, it is recommended to provide a detailed explanation of how the project will be implemented, including the specific tasks, activities, and milestones that will be undertaken, as well as the resources and personnel required to implement the project.

It is important to use clear, concise, and persuasive language throughout the proposal. Avoid using jargon or technical terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader, and be sure to

demonstrate the feasibility and impact of the project. Finally, proofread and edit the proposal multiple times to ensure that it is free of errors and that the language is clear and concise.

5.2 Example Sheets

In order to guide and support the formulation of a good strategy of intervention, the Interreg NEXT MED provides a two Example Sheets (see below) concerning possible project ideas and the related intervention logic. It is very important to highlight that these sheets only represent examples that can be used as a tool to understand the process of drafting a good project proposal; **they are not a scheme that must be adopted** when defining your project strategy.

As stated in section 4.1.2, the Specific Objectives of Interreg NEXT MED represent the Overall Objective of the projects, therefore the project Overall Objective stated in each sheet cannot be changed. Following the selection of the overall objective, projects should choose the most relevant "Type of intervention" (or "Intervention field", not be confused with the "Type of projects" defined for the call for proposals) from the available list in the online application form. The "type of intervention", based on a standard nomenclature defined in Annex 1 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (Common Provisions Regulation), allows to monitor the financial breakdown of the programmed resources by type of intervention, in particular with reference to the achievement of an overall target of 30% of the European Union budget expenditure to support climate objectives. See Table 2 for a complete list of "Intervention field".

On the other hand, the Specific Objectives mentioned in the sheets have been designed take into account the examples of indicative actions that could be supported', as listed for each Specific Objective in the Interreg NEXT MED Programme Document: as indicated in the document, these actions are not exhaustive and are only examples to guide applicants. Similarly, the Specific Objectives in the sheets are not exhaustive and not mandatory and only offer a range of possible options that can be changed, improved and adapted to the project specificities of each project proposal.

It is up to the applicant to define the list of Project Activities and Outputs that will enable the project to achieve the Expected Results and Specific Objective described in each WP; as in the case of the Specific Objective, Activities, Expected Results and Outputs are only examples and do not bind applicants in their choices.

As for the indicators used to evaluate project performance, they must be selected from a predefined list of indicators, but these indicators, provided by the programme, are neither specific nor detailed. The applicant's task is to define each project indicator that will be linked to each predefined programme indicator. For example, the indicator "RCO87 Organisations cooperating across borders" must be drafted specifying the kind of organisation, the geographical context, the quantification of Organisations involved, the sector of intervention, the scope of the cooperation and temporal context.

At the output level, more than one project indicator may be drafted. For the indicator "RCO01 Enterprises supported disaggregated by size (micro, small, medium)", in addition to detailing what is mentioned earlier in this paragraph, the applicant may draw up a second indicator linked to indicator RCO01 concerning the "number of people with increased skills in a given field thanks to the project".

It is also necessary to add for every indicator the values corresponding to the baseline value and the target value. The baseline value is a reference point that express the situation before the start of the project while the target value is the goal set by the project.

Another key aspect in the drafting of the proposal concerns the links between the output indicators and the indicators of the specific objectives. The links have already been established, the corresponding information can be found in the Interreg NEXT MED 'Performance Framework Methodology Paper'; in paragraph 2.2 (Overview of the indicator's framework) of the paper there is a table on the definition of output indicators (table 4: Output indicator definition), where one can find how the output indicators are linked to the indicators of the specific objectives and the type of actions. The applicant is obliged to adhere to these links.

Priority	Programme Specific Objective	Intervention Field
1	RSO1.1	29. Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and universities, focusing on the low carbon economy, resilience and adaptation to climate change
1	RSO1.1	030. Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, focusing on circular economy
1	RSO1.1	005. Investment in intangible assets in micro enterprises directly linked to research and innovation activities
1	RSO1.1	026. Support for innovation clusters including between businesses, research organisations and public authorities and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs
1	RSO1.1	028. Technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and higher education sector
1	RSO1.3	023. Skills development for smart specialisation, industrial transition, entrepreneurship and adaptability of enterprises to change
1	RSO1.3	137. Support for self-employment and business start-ups
1	RSO1.3	026. Support for innovation clusters including between businesses, research organisations and public authorities and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs
1	RSO1.3	021. SME business development and internationalisation, including productive investments
2	RSO2.1	044. Energy efficiency renovation or energy efficiency measures regarding public infrastructure, demonstration projects and supporting measures
2	RSO2.1	046. Support to entities that provide services contributing to the low carbon economy and to resilience to climate change, including awareness-raising measures
2	RSO2.1	041. Energy efficiency renovation of existing housing stock, demonstration projects and supporting measures
2	RSO2.4	059. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem-based approaches)
2	RSO2.4	060. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches)
2	RSO2.4	058. Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem-based approaches)
2	RSO2.5	064. Water management and water resource conservation (including river basin management, specific climate change adaptation measures, reuse, leakage reduction)
2	RSO2.5	066. Waste water collection and treatment compliant with energy efficiency criteria
2	RSO2.6	067. Household waste management: prevention, minimisation, sorting, reuse, recycling

		measures
2	RSO2.6	075. Support to environmentally-friendly production processes and resource efficiency in SMEs
3	RSO4.2	140. Support for labour market matching and transitions
3	RSO4.2	145. Support for the development of digital skills
3	RSO4.2	152. Measures to promote equal opportunities and active participation in society
3	RSO4.2	151. Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)
3	RSO4.5	160. Measures to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems (excluding infrastructure)
3	RSO4.5	131. Digitalisation in health care
4	ISO6.6	173. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context

Table 2: Interreg NEXT MED Intervention Fields

5.2.1 Project intervention logic: example of thematic sheets

This paragraph aims at providing two examples of possible project schemes, trying to show the possible structure of a project intervention logic.

Each cell of the fiche represents a field to be filled in by the applicants in the e-form. Different colours have been used to indicate that each cell represents a separate step in the submission of the proposal. Moreover, each cell can be filled in either by selecting an element from a drop-down list or as a free text by the applicants.

COLOURS REFERENCE

Orange cells contain the column description

Blue cells indicate the corresponding level in the Results chain

Green cells are those whose elements must be chosen from a list of options provided by the Interreg NEXT MED

White cells must be filled in by the applicants.

When submitting the proposal, the partnership must first select the Overall Objective of the project, which must be chosen from the list of possible Overall Objectives. In fact, these derive from the Interreg NEXT MED Programme Specific Objectives, as explained in section "4.1.2 Interreg NEXT MED and Projects".

The partnership must then select the most relevant intervention field of the project. This is an important step since the type of intervention influences the links between output indicators and result indicators and the respective implementation monitoring at Programme level.

Specific Objectives of the project should be obtained from the examples of indicative type of actions that are included in the Interreg NEXT MED Programme Methodology Paper. Given the specific thematic of this second call for proposals on green transition, the Managing Authority drafted specific Terms of References (available as part of the key documents of the call), including indicative type actions which have been “adapted” to the scope of the call. The table in “Annex 3.1 to ToRs_Alignment with potential transnational actions” shows the

harmonization between the “Potential transnational activities of the call” with the type of actions included in the Programme Methodology Paper and their related outputs and results indicators. It is worth repeating that the transnational activities presented in the Terms of References are **not exhaustive and are only examples for applicants**.

It is strongly recommended that applicants try to identify only one Specific Objective for the project as this will facilitate both the preparation of the proposal and, the project implementation. A maximum of two Specific Objectives may be identified.

The Specific Objective will be achieved through the attainment of the Expected Results of the project. These elements must be identified by applicants in the same number as the Specific Objectives (one expected result for each specific objective). **Only one Expected Result may be linked to a single Specific Objective**. In case of a complex Expected Result, it may contain more than one element in its description. Each Expected Result will be measured with the result indicators available in the list, which will depend on the type of intervention selected at the previous proposal submission stage.

It is essential to state the target value of each indicator, and each indicator must be fully and thoroughly detailed. As indicated in the fiche, applicants should take into due consideration two key aspects concerning each indicator. The first one, is to provide clear information on the type, sector, scope, geographical area and timeframe of each indicator; while the second one is to clearly explain how the target value will be calculated and how the indicator is going to be monitored.

The partnership is also responsible for indicating the activities and outputs needed to achieve the project results. These elements must be organised into Work Packages as described in section "4.2 Work Plan Development and Distribution of Tasks". Each Expected Result will be achieved through the implementation of one or more work packages (for a maximum of four work packages per expected result). As described in the Manual, a project may include a maximum of four technical WPs and a maximum of two administrative WPs (management and communication) in its strategy.

Project Outputs must be adequately described, with regard to output indicators, the same considerations made for result indicators must be taken into account. Finally, applicants should organise the project activities by Output and Work Package, listing a maximum of three key activities for each Output and adding an estimate of their total costs.

Key field colours reference	Column description	Level of the results chain	NEXT MED guided selection	Partnership identification

Overall objective	**Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments** *(NEXT MED 1.3 Specific Objective becomes the Overall Objective of the project)*			
Main intervention field of the Project - 021. SME business development and internationalisation, including productive investments *(Taken from the list)*				
	Results chain	**Project indicators**	**Target values**	**Indicatordetailed information**
Project scope	Specific Objective: To improve the environment conditions for co-creation of green start-ups and spin-offs *(Recommended from list: A.1.3.1[2])*			
	EXPECTED RESULT - Increased knowledge-sharing between sectoral organisations - Enhanced access to innovative green tested solutions for sectorial enterprises.	**RCR84 Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of organisation, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator.*
		RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of solution, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame, how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator.*
Outputs	OUTPUT 1: International networks or partnerships are created and strengthened	**RCO87 Organisations cooperating across borders**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of organisation, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator*
	OUTPUT 2: Increased capacity of selected entrepreneurs to identify common opportunities	**RCO01 Enterprises supported disaggregated by size (Micro, small, medium)**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of organisation and/or individual, sector, scope/thematic, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator*
	OUTPUT 3: Business plans of selected MSMEs are drafted/improved	**RCO01 Enterprises supported disaggregated by size (Micro, small, medium)**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of organisation, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator.*
	OUTPUT 4: Investments opportunities for innovative start-ups and spin-offs are enhanced.	**RCO02 Enterprises supported by grants**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of grant, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator.*

[2]See Interreg NEXT MED "Performance Framework Methodology Paper"

Activities	WP1	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
	WP2	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES
	WP3 (technical)	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* OUTPUT 3.1: International networks or partnerships are created and strengthened 3.1.1 Establishment of an international network of start-ups and spin-offs *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* 3.1.2 Capitalisation and exploitation of the best practices and previous pilot experiences *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* OUTPUT 3.2: Increased capacity of selected entrepreneurs to identify common opportunities 3.2.1 Planification, organisation and conduction of training sessions in knowledge-sharing *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)*
	WP4 (technical)	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* OUTPUT 4.3: Business plans of selected MSMEs are drafted/improved 4.3.1Support to the elaboration/updating of selected MSMEs' business plan. *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* OUTPUT 4.4: Investments opportunities for innovative start-ups and spin-offs are enhanced. 4.4.1Elaborationof a call for proposal for targeted MSMEs *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* 4.4.2 Support the implementation and monitoring of the grants *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)*

Key field colours reference	Column description	Level of the results chain	NEXT MED guided selection	Partnership identification

Overall objective	**Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions** *(NEXT MED 2.1Specific Objective becomes the Overall Objective of the project)*			
Main intervention field of the Project - 041. Energy efficiency renovation of existing housing stock, demonstration projects and supporting measures *(Taken from the list)*				
	Results chain	**Project indicators**	**Target values**	**Indicatordetailed information**
Project scope	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1 (SO1): To increase the participation of citizenship in planning and establishment of energy communities. *(Recommended from list: A.2.1.3[3])*			
	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2 (SO2): To improve the energy efficiency of identified existing infrastructure to reduce their energy consumption. *(Recommended from list: A.2.1.1[4])*			
	EXPECTED RESULT 1 (SO1): A sustainable transnational platform to promote energy efficiency solutions is functional and utilised by the organisations involved in the action.	**RCR85 Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of organisation, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator.*
	EXPECTED RESULT 2 (SO2): Enhanced access to innovative tested solutions for energy efficiency.	**RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of solution, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame, how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator.*
Outputs	OUTPUT 1: A digital tool to carry out raising awareness campaign is functional	**RCO81 Participations in joint actions across borders**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of participation, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator*
	OUTPUT 2: Results of applied research are applied to conceive innovative solutions to reduce energy consumption.	**RCO87 Organisations cooperating across borders**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of organisation and/or individual, sector, scope/thematic, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator*
	OUTPUT 3: Pilot scale innovative projects are implemented	**RCO84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of pilot action, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator.*

[3]See Interreg NEXT MED "Performance Framework Methodology Paper"
[4]See Interreg NEXT MED "Performance Framework Methodology Paper"

	OUTPUT 4: A transnational partnership to evaluate the pilot projects is established	**RCO87 Organisations cooperating across borders**	*Indicate the target value of the chosen indicator to be achieved by the project.*	*Specify the type of pilot action, sector, scope, geographical area and time frame and how the number is calculated and how you are going to monitor this indicator.*

Activities	WP1	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
	WP2	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES
	WP3 (technical)	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* OUTPUT 3.1: A digital tool to carry out raising awareness campaign is functional 3.1.1 Definition of the functioning of the platform. *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* 3.1.2 Creation of the platform. *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* 3.1.3 Implementation of raising awareness campaigns. *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)*
	WP4 (technical)	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* OUTPUT 4.2: Results of applied research are implemented to conceive innovative solutions 4.2.1 Compilation of list of possible innovative solutions *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* 4.2.2 Capitalisation and exploitation of previous best practices and pilot experiences *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* 4.2.3 Jointly design of pilot intervention to enhance energy efficiency *(Add macro tota lforeseen cost of this activity)*
	WP5 (technical)	*List the key activities to deliver the output (max 3 key activities per output):* OUTPUT 5.3: Pilot scale innovative projects are implemented 5.3.1 Implementation of a pilot intervention to enhance energy efficiency *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* 5.3.2 Implementation of capacity building activities *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* OUTPUT 5.4: A transnational partnership to evaluate the pilot projects is established 5.4.1 Establishment of the mechanism of evaluation of the pilot projects *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)* 5.4.2 Monitoring and evaluation of the pilot projects *(Add macro total foreseen cost of this activity)*

Chapter 6: Monitoring activities

Monitoring activities are critical in any project, in this context, monitoring activities refer to the ongoing review and assessment of project activities, outputs, specific objective and overall objective to ensure that the project stays on track and meets the set goals.

One of the primary reasons monitoring is so important is to ensure compliance with the Interreg NEXTMED rules and regulations. The programme requires regular reporting on project technical progress and financial management. Without proper monitoring, it can be challenging to gather and report the required data, leading to delayed payments or even termination of the project.

Another critical aspect of monitoring is to identify any issues or risks that may arise during the project's implementation. Regular monitoring allows project managers to identify potential problems early and take corrective action promptly. This can prevent small issues from becoming significant problems that could derail the project.

Monitoring activities also help project teams to stay accountable to the stakeholders, beneficiaries, and partners involved in the project. Through regular monitoring, project managers can track progress towards achieving project goals and ensure that project activities align with stakeholder needs and expectations.

In addition to ensuring compliance, risk mitigation, and accountability, monitoring activities can also help to improve project performance. By regularly reviewing and evaluating project activities and the achievement of indicators, project managers can identify areas for improvement.

In order to ensure the implementation of an adequate monitoring system, it is necessary to develop a monitoring plan that takes into account the indicators used in the logical framework matrix to measure the level of achievement of the outputs, the specific objective and the overall objective.

The monitoring plan should include a detailed description of the monitoring activities, such as the frequency of monitoring, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and Interreg NEXT MED reporting requirements. The monitoring plan is to be developed in consultation with the project partners and, where appropriate, the beneficiaries.

It is crucial to assign responsibilities to the relevant stakeholders; this includes identifying who will be responsible for carrying out the monitoring activities, who will be responsible for collecting and analysing the data, and who will be responsible for reporting the results. It is important to ensure that there is clear communication and coordination among the stakeholders responsible for monitoring.

The first activities to be carried out are the collection and analysis of data concerning the project activities and indicators. Data may be collected by various methods, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups and observations. The data must be analysed by identifying and correcting any errors, inconsistencies or missing values in the data set, conducting simple statistical observations, visualising the data by means of graphs or diagrams and, finally, drawing conclusions.

The results of the monitoring activities should be reported to the Programme and the other partners in a timely and transparent manner. The reporting must be done in accordance

with the Interreg NEXTMED reporting requirements, which include financial and narrative interim and final reports according to the specific rules of the Grant Contract. The reporting should also include an assessment of the project's progress towards achieving its objectives, any issues or risks identified, and any actions taken to address them.

Based on the results of the monitoring activities, corrective action should be taken, whenever necessary, to ensure that the project stays on track and achieves its objectives. This may include changes to the project plan, reallocation of resources or revision of project activities; in any case, these measures shall be considered as exceptional, must always be shared and agreed with the other partners and must be submitted to Interreg NEXT MED for approval according to the procedures to be defined for project modifications.

Monitoring activities should be ongoing throughout the project's implementation to ensure that the project stays on track and achieves its objectives. Continuous improvement should be a key focus of the monitoring activities, and lessons learned from the monitoring should be used to improve project performance.