



Interregional Innovation Investment – Calls for proposal 2021-2022

FAQ, 21 December 2021

For your kind reference, please consider as well [the FAQ of the Sedia Funding Tender Portal](#)

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU is the endorsement letter required only for the coordinator's region or for each region/country participating in an I3 project?

A: The endorsement letter is required per each regional innovation ecosystem at appropriate NUTS level and it is a requirement for all regions/countries members of an I3 project consortium.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU in case of several national/regional levels responsible for Smart Specialisation at which NUTS level the endorsement letter has to be requested?

A: The endorsement letter has to come from the authority at the closest possible level of S3 implementation. In case of participation of two or more regions from the same country, a support letter at NUTS 1 level is relevant.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU do partner fill in the name and organisation of the coordinator in the template of the endorsement letter, despite the partner is coming from another region?

A: Yes, the name and organisation of the coordinator needs to be included in the endorsement letter, irrespective of the location.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU a European Cooperative Society counts as one partner or are its individual members counted separately?

A: The general eligibility criteria and the specific eligibility criteria apply for any kind of business association. If the topic does not include any specific eligibility criteria for “EU wide Associations” then they qualify as eligible applicants (Art 187 FR).

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU Technology Centres and business associations can apply in I3 proposals as partners with eligible costs?

A: Yes, being actors of the regional innovation ecosystems, business associations can be partner of I3 proposals.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU Technology how can Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) participate in I3 proposals?

A: RTOs can participate either as partners (member of the regional innovation ecosystems), or sub-contractors. An RTO can be a project coordinator if: a) it is a no profit organisation and if b) it is endorsed by the regional authority for Smart Specialisation as key actor of the regional innovation ecosystem.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU Third Countries are eligible for funding?

A: No. Partners from third countries can participate in the calls but they are not eligible for funding.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU less developed regions include regions inside the EU27 and developing countries?

A: Less developed regions are defined as regions whose GDP per capita is less than 75 % of the average GDP per capita of the EU-27 (Article 108(2) of the REGULATION 2021/1060).

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU if a same or very similar proposal is submitted several times under different topics, will all proposals be evaluated?

A: Only the last submitted proposal will be evaluated. All previously submitted proposals will be declared ineligible.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU can large infrastructural undertakings, e.g. the construction of a building, be implemented under this call?

A: Building “new” demonstration facilities must be duly justified and can be eligible only if the new infrastructure does not already exist in Europe. The focus is on interconnecting, upgrading and making complementary use of testing and demonstration facilities.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU are large private companies eligible applicants?

A: The participation of large companies in the consortium can be justified when SME investments are connected to the value chain of large companies (ERDF Regulation, Art. 5 (2)).

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU how can SMEs participate and what will be the funding rate?

A: SMEs participate as third parties. SMEs with highest investment needs might participate as consortium partners. Funding rates are specified in the call.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU what is the funding?

A: The funding rate will be fixed in the Grant Agreement according to the conditions set out in the call text, section 10.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU the “non-profit rule” will also be applied to non-profit organisations?

A: Non-profit organisations participate in the I3 calls under the same conditions as any other organisations. However, the profit rule as defined in the Art. 192 of the Financial Regulation, does not apply.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU what is the expected average size of an I3, what is the maximum grant amount and how many projects will be funded per strand per call?

A: The number of funded projects depends on the size of the proposals retained for funding according (call document, section 6), on the quality of submitted applications and on the available budget (call document, section 3).

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU is there any guidance on calculating personnel costs for a project?

A: Yes, please refer to the guidance in the [Annotated Grant Agreement](#) under Article 6.2.A (point 2.1.4); especially regarding the Daily Rate calculation.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU social innovation is eligible for I3?

A: Yes, I3 projects can include any sort of innovation (social innovation, user driven innovation, public sector innovation, product, process or service innovation..) according to the Oslo Manual definition of innovation.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU partnerships not included in S3 Thematic Platforms are eligible for I3?

A. Yes, they are eligible. In order to apply for I3, it is not compulsory for partnerships to be part of the S3 Thematic Platforms.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU is an endorsement from existing S3 Partnerships co-leads compulsory?

A: Endorsement from existing S3 partnerships co-leads is not required.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU why do the eligible consortia need to include 'supply and demand side' of the quadruple helix?

A. Eligible consortia must prove that their business plans include actors from the entire scale of their innovation eco-systems in terms of demand of "innovative solutions" and a supply of these solutions.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU consortia need to include 'various components' of the quadruple helix. How many components are required and are "end users" included?

A. The quadruple helix includes not only citizens but also "end users", the details regarding the individual requirements are defined in the call text, section 6.

Q: Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU do all partners of a proposal need to fill in the Part C form?

A: The Part C must be filled in only by the coordinator of the consortium.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU non-EU countries are to be included in the budget table?

A: No, non-EU countries shall not be included in the budget table.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU the I3 topics are identical with all topics of Technical Assistance Facility projects and eligible?

A. No, the Technical Assistance Facility is a different instrument. Eligible topics for I3 are listed in the call text under section 2.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU is there any recommended balance between advisory/financial support?

A. No, the financial and advisory support has to be instrumental and necessary to make the investment happen. Providing only services without delivering concrete portfolios of business investments is not in line with the expected impact.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU large companies are explicitly excluded from benefitting from funding in the context of the cascade funding?

A. Yes, they are excluded. The objective of cascading funding via financial support to third parties (FSTP) is to provide support for investment in SMEs.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU financial support to third parties (FSTP) can be provided to SMEs by offering a network of demonstration facilities – that are not (all) by definition part of the project consortium?

A. Yes, provided that these needs have been identified by SMEs in their project application. All demonstration services must be instrumental to deliver the expected output of the given project.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is it possible to pay both, the 30% by co-funding and the 70% by the I3 directly to the company but having reimbursed 70% by the EC?

A. EISMEA will fund only the Coordinator of the Consortium and not directly the SMEs involved in the FSTP.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, would smart agriculture fit under the thematic of digital transition or green transition? How many projects will be funded per thematic in strand 1?

A. It would be under "green transition". Themes and priorities are listed in the call documents. Circa 4-5 projects will be financed per cut-off date (strand 1) . There is no estimation divided per topic, because it depends on the quality of the received proposals.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, could SMEs subcontract RTD from their regions, or could they be from other regions?

A. The sub-contracted entities must come from the same NUTS region.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, from where shall the additional funding of the consortia come from?

A. The additional funding of the I3 projects can be covered from any private or public (national, regional) sources or a combination of hereof.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, what is the maximum size of the partnerships forming the consortia?

A. There is no maximum size defined for the partnerships. The requirements for composition of the consortia are set out in section 6 of the call document.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, about - Strand 2a, what shared smart specialization priorities are relevant for the I3 projects?

A. Only the smart specialization priorities selected for the 2021 – 2027 programming period are relevant.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, to which extent is the call open to the participation of RTOs if they are not proposal coordinators?

A. RTOs can be part of the Consortium as partners.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is there any National contact point to ask or it is 100% managed by the Commission and EISMEA?

A. The two calls are managed by EISMEA.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU can the partners balance the % of funding per partner, so that the overall funding rate the whole consortium has to contribute with is 30%?

A. Yes, this is correct.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, does the consortium need to cover any costs?

A. Yes, in line with the funding rate set out in section 10 of the call text, the consortium partners must cover 30% of the eligible costs of the grant amount.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are the Universities, and eventually other public bodies, 100% refunded?

A. The funding rate is set in line with section 10 of the call document.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, since the cascade funding would be used to hire external support services, why not use the EU grant to pay 70% of that value and allow the SME to deliver the remaining 30% in cash?

A. Applicants are free to choose how to design the scheme for financial support to third parties of their proposals. If estimated necessary they may decide to grant the financial support directly to the service provider of the service to the SME. If this option is chosen applicants should make sure to:

- Put in place a system to closely monitor the financial support received by each service provider and the value of the services received by each SME.
- Have a transparent methodology to select the services providers.

When preparing your proposals please keep in mind that the call text (both strands) states that “costs for providing financial support to third parties will be reimbursed at 100% within the limits of the overall co-funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement;” Therefore it might be inappropriate to impose a co-funding rate to the SMEs.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU as required by the call we plan to hand out 70% to SMEs as FSTP. What happens if we fail to reach the planned amount of FSTP demo cases? Do we have to reduce the 30% management share?

A. As mentioned in the call (both strands) at least 70% of the grant must be allocated to investments in companies, in particular SMEs. Costs for providing financial support to third parties cannot exceed

30% of the total grant amount. Therefore handing out 70% of the total budget as FSTP would not be appropriate.

It has to be considered that the direct financial support to third parties is not compulsory for the projects that would be implemented under the I3 calls.

Q. Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, FSTP is limited to regions already included in the consortium and no SMEs in regions not included in consortium can apply to the call, correct?

A. The financial support to third parties must be limited to the SMEs that are established in the S3 participating regions covered by the consortium.
