



Interregional Innovation Investment – Calls for proposal 2021-2022
FAQ, 28 February 2022

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FAQ ID

[Q&A per Category](#)

Admissibility & Technical

- 18842 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are there specific rules for the depreciation of equipment?**
For both calls only the corresponding article (6/C) of the General Model Grant Agreement applies.
- 18827 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, who owns the equipment purchased through financing after the implementation of the project? Is it mandatory for the Coordinator to own them?**
The ownership of equipment purchased during the project phase lies with the project Consortium.
It is recommended that the Consortium partners establish a Consortium agreement to define the final ownership of a piece of equipment after the end of the project.
- 18718 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, please explain how to budget travel, accommodation and subsistence costs.**
Beneficiaries can choose to budget travel, accommodation and subsistence costs as "actual costs" or as "unit costs".

If actual costs: the beneficiaries budget these costs on the basis of an estimation of the expenses to be incurred during the implementation of the project, calculated on the number of travels, number of days, the average price per person and the number of persons that will travel, and according to the beneficiaries' usual practice and internal rules on travels. These costs have to be indicated in the single column corresponding to the heading "Costs (actual costs)" in the detailed budget table.

The beneficiaries have to provide further information (quantity of days, persons and average price) in the last column ("Description") together with all the other details required (e.g. place, destination, mean of transport), and indicate if these costs are part of other work packages (in the relevant column).

If unit costs: the costs have to be budgeted following the "Commission Decision of 12.01.2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework". This means that the costs to be indicated have to correspond to the amounts set in the Annex to the Decision, on the basis of the distance, the mean of transport and the Country of destination.

Commission Decision of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35)
In the detailed budget table, the quantities have to be indicated in the two columns corresponding to the heading "Costs (unit costs)": "Amount per Unit" (=amount set in the Decision) and "Number of Units" (=number of travels - or days for accommodation and subsistence costs -). The total in EUR will be automatically calculated.
The beneficiaries have to provide the details required in the last column ("Description") and indicate if these costs are part of other work packages.
We would also remind that:

travel, accommodation and subsistence costs shall be budgeted only for the personnel working on the action;
the travel has to be justified to the participation of meetings and events planned in the description of the action, supported by the relevant documents, and made following the usual practice of the beneficiary.
- 18668 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, how can I find a specific FAQ with the FAQ ID?**
If you know the ID of the FAQ, please use this root URL combined with the FAQ ID, e.g. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/18256>.
- 18504 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, where you can find updates regarding submission deadlines and call conditions?**
Please regularly check the call documents and the relevant EISMEA I3 Programme Webpage for updates.
- 18488 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU can an institution submit/participate in several proposals?**
Yes, the same institution can participate in more than one I3 proposal, as long as all eligibility criteria are fulfilled. Applicants should also take into account their operational (human, technical and other) and financial resources when applying in several proposals (financial & operational capacity).
- 18441 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU shall the First Level Control (FLC) costs be foreseen in the project budget (other goods, works and services)? Is there a procedure to select an FLC?**
Costs for Certificates on the financial statements (CFS) are eligible if required in the context of the I3 project (i.e. if the costs reach the threshold set out in the Grant Agreement and in particular if the EU contribution to costs ≥ EUR 325 000 at beneficiary level).
These costs have to be estimated in the proposal, in cost category "C Purchase costs", cost sub-category "C3 Other goods, works and services."
There is no specific method to calculate the estimated costs for CFS. They may vary depending on the choice of qualified approved external auditor.
In the financial statements, the costs for CFS must correspond to the eligible costs actually incurred (i.e. the amount paid by the beneficiary for the supply of the service)."
- 18413 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU can applicants apply until the call closure?**
In accordance with section 4 of the call document, applicants can apply any time before the 1st February 2022 (1st cut-off) or any time before the 2nd cut-off date, 18th October 2022.
- 18309 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, could you confirm that the second cut-off date is 18 October 2022? If yes, could applicants apply at any time until then?**
Yes, the second cut-off date is 18 October 2022 and applicants can submit their proposals at any time before this date.
- 18264 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?**
The Part C must be filled in only by the coordinator of the consortium.
- 18259 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?**
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.

Co-Funding Rate

- 18620 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, can SMEs participating in the FSTP scheme complement the consortium funding with their own resources, and how has this to be reflected in the budget table?**
The co-funding rate for this call is a single co-financing rate of 70% for all cost categories at project level. The 30% co-financing can be covered by any other public (national, regional or a combination of both) or private sources – i.e. by the participating companies, as well as by other consortium partners. Please note that it is up to the consortium to define how the FSTP will be organised and co-financed.
The financial contribution provided by third parties should be included in the detailed budget table, part 3, under project income.
- 18539 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU does the 70% funding rate apply to all budget categories, including overhead costs?**
Overhead costs are automatically calculated by the IT system applying the rate of 7% to the sum of the eligible costs of all categories. Then, the 70% funding rate is applied to the total costs of the project.
- 18494 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU are there any limits for consortium partners in the view of individual amounts of funding to manage during the project implementation?**
No, as long all eligibility conditions set out in the call documents are fulfilled.
- 18304 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 70% reimbursed by the EC?**
EISMEA will fund only the Coordinator of the Consortium and not directly the SMEs involved in the FSTP.
- 18300 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, where shall the additional funding of the consortia come from?**
The additional funding of the I3 projects can be covered from any private or public (national, regional) sources or a combination of both.
- 18299 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%?**
Yes, this is correct.
- 18292 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, does the consortium need to cover any costs?**
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.
- 18256 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, what is the funding rate?**
The funding rate will be fixed in the Grant Agreement according to the conditions set out in the call text, section 10.
- 18255 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?**
SMEs participate as third parties. SMEs with highest investment needs might participate as consortium partners. Funding rates are specified in the call.

Eligibility

- 18652 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, what status will apply if multiple consortium partners are based in the administrative region, but located in communities with a different status?**
The location where the business investment will be implemented shall be the guiding principle to determine the status of the region involved in the consortium. The member of the regional innovation ecosystem can be located in different type of territories within a NUTS region. The competent body responsible for Smart Specialisation should provide the endorsement letter at ecosystem level, including companies.
- 18651 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, in which respect does the location of a project consortium partner involved in a specific project application determine the status of the region in that specific application?**
The location where the business investment will be implemented shall be the guiding principle to determine the status of the region involved in the consortium. The member of the regional innovation ecosystem can be located in different type of territories within a NUTS region. The competent body responsible for Smart Specialisation should provide the endorsement letter at ecosystem level, including companies.
- 18540 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU is it correct that depreciation costs for infrastructure are eligible but only for the duration of the project according to the use in the project?**
Yes, the only portion of the costs that will be taken into account is the one which correspond to the duration of the action and rate of actual use for the purposes of the action. These costs have to be recorded in the assets following the rules of the International Accounting System and the usual practice of the beneficiary. Equipment and infrastructure can be new or second-hand. The renting and the leasing costs are also eligible.
- 18491 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU can you provide more information on the type of costs related to the access to testing and demonstration facilities?**
I3 eligible costs include expenditure for accessing testing and demonstration facilities, such as:

Expenditure for the provision of services that meet companies' needs, including the access to networks of demonstrators (physical facilities and testing environments) and technical/scientific expertise. This might include the cost of expertise for validation tests, certification procedures, confidential services to industry and SMEs, cost comparisons or other post-prototyping activities needed before full production and market launch.
Expenditures for system-level tests (small-scale demonstration of entire products, services or processes) in a simulated user environment.
Expenditures for the use of pre-commercial pilot facilities that can serve as validation environment before industrialization; this includes the cost for the use of open innovation test beds (opened up by industry and larger companies for collaboration with start-ups and SMEs) and pilots where trials methods can be applied for testing the market readiness of new products and services.
- 18489 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU what exactly is meant by "investment costs"?**
The investment costs are related to the investments in companies at an appropriate TRL level. These costs are needed for the implementation of tangible and intangible investments, are designed to generate new, altered or improved products, processes and services (new to Europe or new to the application sector) and can for example foresee:
- demonstrating, testing and piloting new innovative solutions
- large scale product/service validation
- market replication, deployment of new or improved technologies and processes
- access to pilots, test beds, testing and demonstration facilities, which are instrumental to the uptake of innovative solutions
- access to highly specialised services to customise innovation to the companies' needs and to remove barriers and bottlenecks to innovation
Concerning budget categories and cost eligibility rules, please refer to the call text (session 10) and to the Model Grant Agreement.
- 18484 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU can you provide more information on the type of costs related to the access to testing and demonstration facilities?**
I3 eligible costs includes expenditure for accessing testing and demonstration facilities, such as:

Expenditure for the provision of services that meet companies' needs, including the access to networks of demonstrators (physical facilities and testing environments) and technical/scientific expertise. This might include the cost of expertise for validation tests, certification procedures, confidential services to industry and SMEs, cost comparisons or other post-prototyping activities needed before full production and market launch.
Expenditures for system-level tests (small-scale demonstration of entire products, services or processes) in a simulated user environment.
Expenditures for the use of pre commercial pilot facilities that can serve as validation environment before industrialization; this includes the cost for the use of open innovation test beds (opened up by industry and larger companies for collaboration with start-ups and SMEs) and pilots where trials methods can be applied for testing the market readiness of new products and services.
- 18478 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU where we can find details on the reporting and the accounting rules for financial support to third parties?**
For any details related to reporting and accounting please check the general eligibility conditions and the conditions for financial support to third parties in the MGA - Chapter 3, ARTICLE 6 — ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE COSTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS.
- 18415 Under the calls I3-2021-INV1 and I3-2021-INV2a can costs for permanent staff declared in order to co-finance the project?**
Yes, in compliance with the eligibility rules for direct costs. The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement.
- 18297 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, could SMEs subcontract Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) from their regions, or could they be from other regions?**
The sub-contracted entities must come from the same NUTS region.
- 18294 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are the Universities, and eventually other public bodies, 100% refunded?**
The funding rate is set in line with section 10 of the call document.
- 18265 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are non-EU countries to be included in the budget table?**
No, non-EU countries are not included in the budget table.
- 18262 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?**
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.
- 18257 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, will the "non-profit rule" also be applied to non-profit organisations?**
Non-profit organisations participate in the I3 calls under the same conditions as any other organisations. The profit rule as defined in the Art. 192 of the Financial Regulation does not apply.
- 18254 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are large private companies eligible applicants?**
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)).
- 18251 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, do "less developed regions" include regions inside the EU27 and developing countries?**
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).
- 18250 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are Third Countries eligible for funding?**
No, partners from third countries can participate in the calls but they are not eligible for funding.
- 18248 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, can Technology Centres and business associations apply in I3 proposals as partners with eligible costs?**
Yes, being actors of the regional innovation ecosystems, business associations can be partner of I3 proposals.

Endorsement & NCP

- 18717 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, can the letter of support (endorsement letter) be signed digitally? Or should the letter be signed manually and scanned?**
Both options are possible:
- In general, if the supporting entity can sign the letter with a qualified electronic signature, then this is equivalent to the blue ink signature (with communication of the original). For further information please see EU Trust Services Dashboard (europa.eu).
- Please note that these letters are part of the application support documents, therefore EISMEA cannot validate the letters signed by the third party in a qualified signature as usually (see EU Sign (europa.eu)).
- In other words, the letter of support can only be signed digitally, if the qualified electronic signature is acceptable and accepted by the grant applicant who is responsible to ensure its validity.
- If no qualified electronic signature is possible, then yes we need the supporting letter in the usual way manually dated and signed (and stamped if possible) and uploaded in pdf version, while the applicant should keep the original of the letter.
- 18622 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU & I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are SMEs from regions not belonging to the consortium eligible for financial support or services, if an endorsement letter is be provided by these region?**
The purpose of the endorsement letter is a) to certify that the S3 strategy of the participating region is coherent with the investment priority identified by the I3 project b) to endorse the entities belonging to the regional innovation ecosystem (including companies) that will benefit from the grant support/FSTP.
Therefore, SMEs belonging to regions that are not member of the consortium are not eligible for financial support to third parties or services provided by project consortium partners. However, according to the call text, organisations (including regions) can consider the possibility to participate in the consortium with different roles (see the Call text chapter 13).
- 18612 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is it possible to provide the LETTER OF SUPPORT (MS/REGION S3 ENDORSEMENT) only before the signature of the Grant Agreement?**
The endorsement letter from S3 authorities is a mandatory supporting document in your application (see call text, point 5). Without the endorsement letter, the proposal will not fulfil the admissibility conditions.
- 18611 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is there a database of the competent authorities in charge of S3 for all European countries / regions?**
A database of the competent authorities responsible for Smart Specialisation does not exist. Still, the managing authority, responsible for the ERDF in your respective countries, will be able to provide information on the competent body responsible for Smart Specialisation. You can also find some information under this link:
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes
- 18447 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, who should provide the endorsement letter for I3 in countries where competent bodies responsible for smart specialisation are present at several NUTS levels (e.g. 1-2 and 1 -3)?**
The endorsement letter should be provided by the competent body responsible for Smart Specialisation placed at the closest possible level to S3 implementation (NUTS 2 or 3). NUTS1 level endorsement is compulsory only for participating countries where a competent body for Smart Specialisation does not exist at NUT2 or NUT 3 level.
- 18307 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, what is the NUTS level for being an eligible partner (updated)?**
NUTS level eligibility is 1 or 2, depending on how the country is classified and divided by Eurostat. If NUTS2 level does not exist in a given Member State, the appropriate NUTS level is those of the competent authority responsible for Smart Specialisation.
- 18298 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?**
The two calls are managed by EISMEA.
- 18261 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is an endorsement from existing S3 Partnerships co-leads compulsory?**
Endorsement from existing S3 partnerships co-leads is not required.
- 18245 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, at which NUTS level does the endorsement letter have to be requested in case of several national/regional levels responsible for Smart Specialisation?**
The endorsement letter has to be provided by 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.
- 18244 Under Interregional Innovation Investments 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?**
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.
- 18246 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 coming from another region?**
Yes, the name and organisation of the coordinator needs to be included in the endorsement letter, irrespective of the location.

Participation & Consortium Composition

- 18888 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, the eligible consortium coordinator has to be a “non-profit” legal entity. Can consortium coordination tasks be delegated to a “for-profit” affiliated entity?**
 In case the coordinator is a public body, it can delegate some tasks (submission of deliverables, reports and payments to other consortium members) to an entity having the ‘authorization to administer’ as defined in Article 7 (b) I3 MGA. This entity should be created, controlled or affiliated to them.
 However, the applicant, the consortium and the application have to comply with all criteria defined in the call for proposals, including eligibility.
 This means that a non-profit organization has to act as coordinator of the consortium and NOT a for-profit entity (otherwise this eligibility criteria would not be fulfilled by the application).
 According to the call conditions, a for-profit organization could potentially participate as affiliated entity in the I3 project BUT it wouldn't be allowed to implement core coordination tasks that are under the responsibility of the consortium coordinator, as defined in the MGA.
- 18884 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, what are the obligations of the consortium coordinators? Can the consortium coordinator delegate or subcontract some coordination tasks to any other “beneficiary” or a “third party”??**
 The coordinator may not delegate or subcontract the core tasks to any other beneficiary or third party (including affiliated entities).
 More details and exceptions can be found on the Art.7 of the General Model Grant Agreement.
- 18880 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, can an affiliated entity participate in I3 proposals? Who will check the entities affiliation links during the preparation of the proposals?**
 Affiliated entities can participate in I3 projects, provided that they fulfill all the criteria of the Art 187 (b) of the Financial Regulation.
 The Granting Authority does not assess fulfillment of this Article during the preparation of project proposals.
 This remains the entire responsibility of the applicant.
- 18653 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are modifications with regard to the project proposal or the project consortium after the submission and before the signature of the Grant Agreement allowed?**
 The “quality of the consortium” and the “relevance/consistency of the project” are elements assessed during the independent evaluation process as indicated in the call document.
 Changing the content of the project and the composition of the consortium after the submission and before the signature of the Grant Agreement is not possible because it would change essential elements used for the proposal assessment and scoring.
- 18625 Under I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU does a proposal with a) several SMEs within the consortium and participating in multiple pilots and b) external SMEs (funded via FSTP) replicating the pilots' activities fit the call objectives?**
 In the framework of a broader investment portfolio, SMEs (selected upfront / member of the consortium) can participate in several pilots (testing and experimentation activities), needed to validate their investment projects.
 Additional SMEs can be selected during the implementation of the project (via FSTP/ cascading funding mechanisms).
 Market replication and other activities instrumental to innovation diffusion are eligible under I3-2021-INV2a call.
- 18621 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, with regard to the evaluation criteria could you please clarify what you understand under “arrangement protocols”?**
 As foreseen by the call text (chapter 13), it is recommended to set up a Consortium agreement with internal arrangements. Arrangement protocols are the internal agreements set up to specify details and rules on how the coordinator distributes the grant payments according to the agreed consortium principles & parameters, and to facilitate any dispute management inside the consortium. Please see also I3 MGA Chapter 4.
- 18487 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU with regard to interregional dimension: Do project participants have to come from different regions or can model solutions developed in one region just be replicated in other regions?**
 For the purpose of the I3 Instrument, the interregional dimension is related to the S3, which is the coordinating principle for interregional collaboration. Therefore, the consortium must involve regions with shared S3 investment priorities, coherent with the identified value chain investment. The quality of an interregional consortium takes into consideration the wide geographical coverage of participating regions (number of regions involved in the value chain) and to what extent those regions reflect strengths/add value (capabilities, knowledge, innovative solutions..) in the value chain.

 Under Strand 2a market replication projects are eligible, involving a more limited number of regions. Replicating a model developed in another region can be proposed as a way to increase the capacities of less developed regions to participate in EU value chains.
 For further details concerning the consortium eligibility and the minimum number of regions per strand, please refer to the call text eligibility criteria.
- 18479 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU are there any limits for consortium partners in the view of individual amounts of funding to manage during the project implementation?**
 No, as long all eligibility conditions set out in the call documents are fulfilled.
- 18414 Under the calls I3-2021-INV1 and I3-2021-INV2a (all topics) can public bodies like universities act as Consortium Coordinator?**
 Yes, the coordinator must be either a public body, private non-profit organisation or international organisation (see section 6 - call document).
- 18332 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, can a public university be a Consortium Coordinator?**
 Yes, as in line with section 6 Eligibility/Consortium composition of the call document.
- 18329 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, large enterprises are instrumental for the value chain, e.g. to implement disruptive innovation demonstrated by SME'S, but how can they participate?**
 Participation of large companies in the consortium can be justified when SME investments are connected to the value chain of large companies (ERDF art 5.2), with the funding rate of 70%.
- 18326 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, to which extent is the call open to Research Technology Organisations not acting as coordinators?**
 RTOs can participate as partners in the Consortium.
- 18302 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, what are the minimum and maximum sizes of the partnerships forming the consortia?**
 There is no maximum size defined for the partnerships. The minimum requirements for composition of the consortia are set out in section 6 of the call document.
- 18295 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?**
 RTOs can be part of the Consortium as partners.
- 18263 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?**
 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.
- 18249 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, how can Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) participate in I3 proposals?**
 RTOs can participate either as partners (member of the regional innovation ecosystem), or subcontractors. 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.
- 18247 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, does a European Cooperative Society count as one partner or are its individual members counted separately?**
 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).

Themes & Topics

- 18486 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU what is meant by sub-projects? Is there a minimum number?**
The individual sub-projects are the investment ready projects of a project portfolio which address one or several bottlenecks (e.g. regulatory, commodities, equipment, etc.) within a specific S3 cooperation area. The portfolio investments accelerate demonstration processes in different segments of the value chains for the uptake of innovation. There is no minimum number of projects per portfolio. In principle, the number of investment projects composing the overall value chain investment should be proportional and appropriate to the requested grant size and the investment sector.
- 18485 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU how can a portfolio of projects be described?**
The concept of portfolio refers to the identification of a number of investment-ready projects. The responsibility for the conception of a portfolio of projects lies with the applicant. The individual sub-projects of a project portfolio usually address one or several bottlenecks (e.g. regulatory, commodities, equipment, etc.) within the specific S3 cooperation area and accelerate demonstration processes in different/various value chains for the uptake of innovation.
- 18327 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, should all partners of the project focus on the same RIS3 line?**
All partners can focus on different S3 lines.
- 18301 Under I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, about - Strand 2a, what shared smart specialisation priorities are relevant for the I3 projects?**
Only the smart specialisation priorities selected for the 2021–2027 programming period are relevant.
- 18296 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?**
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.
- 18267 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is there any recommended balance between advisory/financial support?**
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.
- 18266 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are the I3 topics identical with all topics of Technical Assistance Facility projects and eligible?**
No, the Technical Assistance Facility is a different instrument. Eligible topics for I3 are listed in the call text under section 2.
- 18260 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is social innovation eligible for I3?**
Yes, I3 projects can include any sort of innovation (social innovation, user driven innovation, public sector innovation, product, process or service innovation, etc.) according to the Oslo Manual definition of innovation.
- 18258 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, what is the expected average size of an I3 project, what is the maximum grant amount and how many projects will be funded per strand per call?**
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).
- 18253 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?**
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.

Other

- 18623 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, regarding the mandatory annexes, which documents are required for the submission of the „Annual activity reports“ ?**
The “Annual Activity Report” is a non-compulsory annex. The consortium might decide to add this supplementary annex if the I3 proposal is the result of previous cooperation activities, performed in other platforms or in the framework of other initiatives (e.g. Thematic S3 Platforms, Interreg Europe, REGIO Pilot actions ecc.).
- 18490 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU are there methods in place for granting assistance from the ERDF Funds?**
For any questions related to possible support from a Cohesion Policy programme, applicants shall address themselves to the relevant national/regional authorities (ERDF Managing Authorities).
- 18328 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is there any pre-financing scheme for partners?**
Yes, there is. The concrete modalities are set out in section 10 of the call text.
- 18308 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, in order to start planning with our partners, we would like to ask for the possibility to have a meeting with EISMEA for clarifying our questions.**
In order to ensure equal treatment and transparency to all applicants, EISMEA does not organise any bilateral exchange since all the questions are provided in written and published in the FAQ.
- 18252 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?**
Only the last submitted proposal will be evaluated. All previously submitted proposals will be declared ineligible.

Financial Support to Third Parties

- 18483 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) is allowed. Could you please advise how FSTP can be practically organised in order to fulfil the corresponding call conditions?**
The call texts provide the possibility to SMEs to participate in the calls either directly as partners in the proposal consortium or indirectly, via receiving funding from the financial support to third parties scheme (FSTP), which is optional and not compulsory under these two calls.
FSTP – “Cascade funding”, is a mechanism that allows funding to beneficiaries that are not identified in the Grant Agreement as members of the eligible consortium. Final beneficiaries (recipients of the cascading grant) can be selected during the duration of the projects according to the rules foreseen for the FSTP schemes in the call text. For the purpose of this call, the recipients must be SMEs that are established in the 53 participating regions covered by the consortium.
- In the framework of FSTP, the financial support to SMEs must follow certain conditions set out in the call texts:
- a) Single co-financing rate of 70% for all cost categories and all beneficiaries applies :
- Please be aware of the fact that the co-funding rate for this call is a single co-financing rate of 70% for all cost categories at project level. The single co-financing rate of 70% also applies for FSTP.
- b) What is the maximum amount of financial support under FSTP?
- The maximal amount of financial support for each third party (“recipient”) may not exceed EUR 60 000, unless a higher amount is required (and duly justified in the Application Form) in the case that the objective of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to achieve.
- c) Is own financial contribution of SMEs participating in the FSTP scheme allowed?
- Yes. Applicants may consider it necessary to design proposals involving own financial participation of the SMEs to complement the amounts of the FSTP that they would benefit from. This might ensure larger impact of the investments as well as higher commitment with regard to the results from the part of the SMEs
- d) What type of expenditures can be included in an FSTP scheme?
- Applicants have a certain degree of freedom to design their FSTP schemes in their project proposals.
 - Please note that the general principles of accounting have to be respected. No costs shall be offset against income.
 - Any in-kind contribution (in the meaning of non-financial resources made available free of charge by third parties to a beneficiary, see Art 2(36) FINANCIAL REGULATION (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046) is not eligible for the calculation of the project eligible costs covered by the Grant Agreement.
 - If required by the I3 direct beneficiaries (i.e. partners of the consortium) in their open call for FSTP, SMEs could contribute to the investment projects with (not exhaustive examples): groundwork for testing and optimizing products and production processes, exploration of new processing technologies, time spent on project implementation). This would not impact the single co-financing rate of 70% that the direct I3 beneficiaries would be entitled to receive in cost category “Direct financial Support to 3rd parties”
 - If estimated necessary for company’s investments, the grant might finance service providers, which will deliver highly specialised support services to the SMEs. The services must be: 1) identified by the companies 2) duly justified as necessary and instrumental to implement the concrete business investment.
 - If this option is chosen, please consider to put in place a system to closely monitor the financial support provided by each service provider and the value of the services received by each SME. The consortium should propose and implement a transparent methodology to select the most appropriate service providers.
 - Cost for the use of demonstration facilities by companies, to pilot and validate technologies in operational environment.
- 18480 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU are budget revisions for financial support to third parties allowed?**
Please check the relevant conditions regarding budget flexibility in the MGA-Chapter 3.
- 18446 Under I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are market replication activities eligible? Can a project, be implemented via interregional demonstration cases (sub projects), coherent with a common topic?**
Connecting testing and demonstration facilities at interregional level is an eligible activity under I3 calls provided that this activity is related to companies’ demonstration needs. More details are available in the call text: Activities that can be funded (eligible activities), page 18
The project implementation can take place via interregional demonstration cases to test and replicate the results in less developed regions. Selected groups of SMEs can work on sub projects (value chain segments), coherent with a given topic/value chain.
- 18445 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, is Financial Support to Third Parties compulsory?**
Financial support to third parties is not compulsory. Companies, including SMEs might be partner of the consortium as well.
- 18305 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: is it correct?**
Yes, the financial support to third parties must be limited to the SMEs that are established in the 53 participating regions covered by the consortium.
- 18291 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?**
Applicants are free to choose how to design the scheme for financial support to third parties of their proposals. If deemed 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.
- 18289 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?**
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.
- 18269 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, can financial support to third parties (FSTP) be provided to SMEs by offering a network of demonstration facilities – that are not (all) by definition part of the project consortium?**
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.
- 18268 Under I3-2021-INV1-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU and I3-2021-INV2a-DIGIT/GREEN/MANU, are large companies explicitly excluded from benefitting from funding in the context of the cascade funding?**
Yes, large companies are excluded. The objective of cascading funding via financial support to third parties (FSTP) is to provide support for investment in SMEs.