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Southern Regional Assembly

Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027

SMARTER



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Supported from the ERDF (Investment for jobs and growth goal), ESF+, the Cohesion Fund, the JTF and the EMFAF – Article 21(3)

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Environmental and Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Statement

The programme area has a wealth of environmental assets from Ireland's highest mountains, dramatic coastlines, and remote rural areas to fertile agricultural landscapes. Our rich urban environment includes a strong and historic network of cities, towns and villages. These have associated flora, fauna, biodiversity and cultural heritage assets, many of which are protected through European and National legislation, including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas. The Programme includes environmental assessment documents, on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), an Appropriate Assessment (AA) and a Strategic Flood Risk Appraisal Screening (SFRA).

Reflecting the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the programme will contribute to mainstreaming climate actions and to support activities that would respect the climate and environmental standards and priorities of the Union and would Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) to environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council. To ensure compliance with the requirements for DNSH the programme will endeavour to support projects and activities that protect biodiversity, water, air & land quality, and marine resources, that encourages circular economy initiatives that reduce waste and increases recycling and that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

At the project level, all applications for development consents for projects emanating from any policies that may give rise to likely significant effects on the environment will need to be accompanied by one or more of the following, as relevant:

- Ecological Impact Assessment Report (EclA);
- Environmental Report;
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report - if necessary, under the relevant legislation;
- Natura Impact Statement - if necessary, under the relevant legislation.

Environmental Assessment

- (a) Any reference to support for all plans, projects, activities and development in the Programme should be considered to refer to 'environmentally sustainable development' that has no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites and no net loss of biodiversity, that shall be subject to appropriate feasibility studies, best practice site/route selection (to consider environmental constraints such as landscape, cultural heritage, the protection of water quality, flood risks and biodiversity as a minimum), environmental assessment including EclA to support development management and where required, the completion of statutory SEA, EIA and AA processes as appropriate
- (b) The Programme seeks to protect, manage, and through enhanced ecological connectivity, improve the coherence of the Natura 2000 Network in the Region.
- (c) Support for other plans/ programmes (and initiatives arising) is based on appropriate SEA, SFRA, EIA and AA processes being undertaken to ensure the avoidance of adverse effects on European Sites and ensure implementation of mitigation measures where required.
- (d) The Programme supports relevant development proposals that aim to protect of inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater, preventing pollution, further deterioration of water quality, promotes sustainable water use and enhances improvement of the aquatic environment.
- (e) Any planning consent process emanating from support through the programme will ensure compliance with the EU's Waste Framework Directive and EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy as such projects will be subject to:
 - i. the objectives of City and County Development Plans and Local Area Plans supporting the circular economy and prioritizing waste prevention followed by re-use, recycling and recovery before landfill;
 - ii. adhere to Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Demolition Projects published by the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage and any updated guidelines and

- iii. adhere to the new National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy (NWMPCE), which will replace the Southern Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 and the Eastern and Midland Waste Management Plan 2015-2021.

Thereby, minimising the use of natural resource inputs, reducing waste, pollution and carbon emissions and improving the productivity of resources used in development through extending the life span of materials and facilitating the repurposing, recycling and re-use of these resources at end of life.

1. Programme strategy: main challenges and policy responses

Reference: points (a)(i) to (viii) and point (a)(x) of Article 22(3) and point (b) of Article 22(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

INTRODUCTION

The Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027 [‘the Programme’] is an ERDF co-funded investment programme that supports balanced regional development across two of the three NUTS2 regions of Ireland, the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midland Region. The two regions comprise eighteen counties and include the four metropolitan city areas of Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick-Shannon, the regional growth centres of Athlone in the Midlands and Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry on the Dublin-Belfast corridor, a network of twenty-five key towns and an extensive rural hinterland.

This €663 million co-funded programme of investment is supported by €265 million of EU funding and €398 million of national funding provided by the Government of Ireland. The Programme assists the Government’s aim of promoting balanced regional development by supporting the implementation of the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies in each of the two regions in the programme area and is focused on the following key strategic outcomes:

Developing Smarter More Competitive Regions by building RD&I capacity within the public research institutions in our regions, by accelerating the translation of cutting-edge research into commercial applications at a regional level, by supporting innovation diffusion and by strengthening regional innovation ecosystems in line with Ireland’s Smart Specialisation Strategy and the Regional Enterprise Plans.

Creating Greener More Energy Efficient Regions and a Just Transition by focusing on scaling up investment in actions that improve the energy efficiency of residential homes while targeting homeowners in, or at risk of, energy poverty.

Supporting Sustainable Urban Development in our Regions by taking an integrated strategic approach to the regeneration of our towns using a Town Centres First Framework.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

The key challenges and future ambitions for the programme area are clearly articulated in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (2020) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019) [‘the RSES’]. The RSES are strategic plans and investment frameworks to shape the future development of Ireland’s regions to 2031 and beyond. The making of each RSES required detailed research and an extensive public and stakeholder consultation process. The RSES are informed by Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan – and by economic and other relevant policies of the government, including climate change plans and the ten-year capital investment plan.

The Programme supports the implementation of each RSES, taking into account lessons learnt from past experience, the Country Reports (CR2019, CR2020), an independent Needs Analysis for ERDF and ESF+ Funding (2020), the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP2021), the National Development Plan Review (NDP2021), public consultations, and a wide range of national and EU reports and policy documents. There is a particular focus on aligning the Programme with other EU, national and private sector actions and investment under Ireland’s Climate Action Plan (2021), Smart Specialisation Strategy (2022), and Town Centre First – a Policy Approach for Irish Towns (2022).

The Programme is framed by EU policy objectives, the thematic concentration and climate change contribution requirements set out in the regulations, the opportunity to complement other EU, national and regional investments and the limited amount of ERDF funding available relative to the scale of the challenges in the regions. In this respect, the Programme seeks to avoid competing with other public or private investment and focuses instead on key challenges and investment needs where ERDF can make a strong and visible impact to the benefit of the regions and their citizens.

The Programme focuses on three selected Policy Objectives and has been structured under three priorities to reflect this.

Priority 1: SMARTER AND MORE COMPETITIVE REGIONS

The vision set out in Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy (2022) ['S3'] is to "embrace a regional approach to addressing Ireland's Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) challenges and to "provide a 'bridge' between regional and national innovation strategy building and decision making, bringing coherence to RD&I planning for the benefit of enterprise and advancing the RD&I agenda regionally and nationally".

The vision for the Southern Region – to become one of Europe's most creative, innovative, greenest and liveable regions – and the vision for the Eastern and Midland Region – the creation of a sustainable and competitive region that supports the health and wellbeing of people and places – are set out in the RSES for the Southern Region (2020) and the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019) respectively. Each RSES includes high level strategic objectives and Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) consistent with the five specific objectives for the ERDF under policy objective 1 ['PO1'] "a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity".

The RSES for the Southern Region sets out an economic vision for the region based on "five economic principles of smart specialisation, clustering, placemaking for enterprise development, knowledge diffusion, and capacity building".

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region's preferred economic strategy promotes "smart specialisation strategies based on identified strengths and competitive advantages, combined with cluster policies that promote economies of scale and network effects in certain locations. The strategy should also support diversification of local economies and development of innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems for sustained national growth that can withstand external shocks".

A key factor to ensuring sustainable economic development is the degree to which a region's enterprise base can remain competitive and productive, with CR2019 and CR2020 noting that differences in regional competitiveness in Ireland are sizeable and that significant productivity gaps remain between lagging domestic firms and highly productive multinational companies.

While both regions in the programme area are assigned to the second strongest innovation group in the Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2021 - the Strong Innovators, this can hide underperformance and regional imbalances both within and between the two regions. The Eastern and Midland Region continues to perform above both the State and EU average, with index scores of 102.2 and 110.5 respectively. Despite this, the region's RIS index score has decreased in both absolute and relative terms since 2011. The Southern Region has the lowest real growth rate of regional Gross Value Added (GVA) and total business expenditure on R&I amounted to €489 per head of population in 2019, below the State average of €662 (Central Statistics Office). From a labour market perspective, a total of 6,242 people were engaged as R&I staff – in the private sector – in the Southern Region in 2019, accounting for 0.79% of the region's labour force (Q4, 2019), which was the lowest ratio out of the three NUTS 2 regions of Ireland and below the State average of 1.12%.

According to the Regional Competitiveness Index (RCI) 2019, the Southern Region was ranked the 129th most competitive region out of 268 regions in the EU, with the region underperforming with respect to infrastructure and market size, and – to a lesser extent – labour market efficiency and innovation. Interlinked to the region's competitiveness performance is the underlying challenge of lagging productivity levels in domestic SMEs in Ireland – as documented in the Country Reports, with the enterprise base of the region very reliant on these types of enterprises. As of 2018, 83,596 or 99.7 % of enterprises based in the Southern Region were classified as SMEs, and of the three NUTS 2 Regions, the Southern Region was the most reliant on these types of enterprises.

Meanwhile, the Eastern and Midland Region was ranked the 89th most competitive region in the EU, as per the findings of the RCI 2019. In this regard, the region underperforms relative to its peer regions with respect to labour market efficiency and market size. Like the other NUTS 2 Regions, the Eastern and Midland Region enterprise base is also notably reliant on SMEs, with 137,049 or 99.5 % of the region's enterprises classified as SMEs.

Relative to the EU average in 2019, the programme area underperforms across the following key innovation indicators which can be addressed by PO1; Trademark applications, Innovative SMEs collaborating with others, Lifelong learning, Non-R&D expenditure business sector, R&D expenditure business sector, Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations, Design applications, R&D expenditure public sector, and EPO patent applications.

The Programme responds to the S3 and to the RSES, together with challenges and policy responses set out in Innovation 2020, the NDP, the National Economic Recovery Plan, Enterprise 2025 Renewed, SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan, the National AI Strategy, Industry 4.0 Strategy, Our Rural Future, Science Foundation Ireland Strategy 2025 and the Regional Enterprise Plans.

The programme focuses on addressing the following five key challenges in the programme area under PO1.

(i) RD&I capacity building

Technological Universities (TUs) are a part of the changing face of higher education in Ireland. These multi-campus technological universities will drive access, excellence, and regional development, strengthening the links with enterprise and employers in their regions and beyond. The first TU in the country, Technological University Dublin, was established in the programme area in January 2019. It has now been joined by three new TUs in the programme area; Munster Technological University (MTU), established January 2021; Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, established October 2021; and South East Technological University, established May 2022. The technological universities have a critical role to play in supporting higher levels of investment, both public and private, in industry-focused research in the regions. This will require significant capacity building. The Programme will focus on strengthening the TUs' research and innovation offices and the industry gateways that support delivery of collaborative projects. This increased capacity will support far greater engagement with enterprises in the regions, recognizing that collaboration with SMEs in particular will frequently begin through smaller non-financial supports.

(ii) Supporting knowledge transfer

The S3 consultation emphasized the importance of funding the Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs) in the universities, technological universities and Institutes of Technology in the regions, building on the success of the Technology Transfer Strengthening Initiative (TTSI) that is due to end in 2022. These TTOs support: the increased use of national template agreements to simplify and speed up contracting with higher education institutes, as well as to bring more consistency for companies and innovators; the collection and publication of information on the facilities, equipment and supports available to companies to access within the third level and State-funded research base at national and regional level; the need to orchestrate existing and emerging capacities in regional areas and to raise the profile nationally and internationally; the continuity of industry-academic collaborations beyond a completed project to help companies to bring a project's innovations to market; and the development of spin out companies.

(iii) Accelerating the translation of cutting-edge research into commercial applications

The OECD study on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland (2019) stated that "Ireland is a successful generator of high-growth firms and its SMEs are innovative. Attitudes toward entrepreneurship are also positive overall. However, business dynamism and the start-up rate are relatively low, Irish SMEs are not very active in international markets, and SME productivity growth is stagnant. Approaches are also needed to connect SMEs and entrepreneurs in remote regions with broader entrepreneurship ecosystems in urban centres and larger cities". Science Foundation Ireland's 2025 strategy recognizes that the human capital, innovation and technology created by SFI-funded research must be transferred effectively to the domestic SME sector. The Programme will support SFI's new strategy to help boost the productivity of domestically owned enterprises by focusing on building partnerships and connections between SMEs and Higher Education Institutions in the regions. This will be done through knowledge exchange, through formal technology licensing, through new SME supports, through spinning out new companies, and through working with Enterprise Ireland, the Institutes of Technology, the universities and the new technological universities. One of SFI's KPIs is the creation of a 'unicorn' company (value > €1bn) by 2025. This ambitious target sets the bar for what SFI believes can be achieved from its funded research.

(iv) Driving the development of skills needed for ‘needs led’ innovation in the regions

Smart Specialisation in our regions will drive the development of skills needed for enhancing innovation activity across the regional economies. This will be achieved in the programme area through new and enhanced supports based on creating the necessary skills for ‘needs led’ innovation, informed by existing international and national best practice and by our smart specialisation analysis and findings.

(v) Strengthening and developing functional regional innovation ecosystems

Smart Specialisation in our regions will encourage more regionally dispersed RD&I, strengthen the enterprise base and identify emerging areas of opportunity. This will be achieved by leveraging and building on the analysis of Irish regions’ strengths and emerging areas of opportunity undertaken as part of the development of Ireland’s S3; addressing gaps in existing regional innovation infrastructures and systems by supporting projects aligned with the nine Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs); and seeking out opportunities to enable inter-regional collaboration through structures like the REP national oversight group.

These regional challenges are aligned under two of the PO1 specific objectives:

developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies (RSO1.1); and

enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments (RSO1.3)

Investment needs under the three remaining PO1 specific objectives will be met through other sources of public and private investment. This will include national funding of a wide range of grant supports and financial instruments for SMEs and public research bodies, including for example, the research centres, innovation partnership programme, commercialisation fund and the microenterprise schemes that were ERDF co-financed in 2014-2020.

The Programme will complement actions under the NRRP to support the digitalisation of businesses, to drive reforms in regional skills development, digital infrastructure in schools, staff and curriculum development in the technological universities, and to use mission-oriented challenges to incentivise researchers to deliver tangible impact for society in areas such as health, agriculture and climate through a new National Grand Challenges Programme in research.

Enterprise Ireland, an Intermediary Body under the Programme, leads the National Support Network for Horizon Europe and as such will provide important opportunities for complementarities between Horizon Europe and ERDF supported actions. The Programme responds to S3 ambitions by strengthening the new TUs to be regional innovation leaders. These TUs have had some success in Horizon Europe but had not had the real capacity needed to compete in this environment or to bring regional actors such as SMEs and TUs together in a meaningful way. This new capacity is designed to address that very issue, the Programme is therefore highly complementary to and synergistic with Horizon Europe ambitions.

The Programme will also complement funding and activities under the other CPR funds, Connecting Europe Facility, LIFE programme, InvestEU and other financial instruments managed by the European Investment Bank. This includes activities that support the objectives of the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0. For example, investment in RD&I capacity building in the programme area will support EMFAF investment in research to tackle climate actions, knowledge sharing, development of process innovation to support operational optimisation in the processing sector and research to quantify the potential of coastal habitats as carbon sinks .

Actions under PO1 are closely aligned to many of the actions set out under the European Research Area (ERA) policy agenda, in particular Action 15 to Build-Up Regional and National R&I Ecosystems to Improve Regional/National Excellence and Competitiveness, Action 16 to Improve EU-Wide Access to Excellence, and Action 17 to Enhance the Strategic Capacity of Europe’s Public Research Performing Organisations. For example, the focus on strengthening RDI capacity in the TUs will see TUs extend latent research and innovation excellence into their regions (but also nationally and internationally), by working with enterprise actors to create and exploit knowledge in line with the ERA policy agenda.

Priority 2: LOW-CARBON ENERGY EFFICIENT REGIONS

The RSES for the Southern Region (2020) and the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region (2019) both have climate action and the protection of the environment at their core. Each RSES includes Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) consistent with the eight specific objectives for the ERDF under policy objective 2 [‘PO2’] “A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility”.

CR2019 and the National Energy & Climate Plan 2021-2030 highlighted that economic growth and GHG emissions had yet to be decoupled, warning that Ireland was falling further behind in decarbonising its economy and the lack of progress would make the challenge of meeting EU obligations more difficult, while also increasing the cost of future action. National projections on GHG indicated that cumulated emissions would be 20 percentage points short of the reduction target.

CR2020 reported some progress and acknowledged that the publication of the Climate Action Plan 2019 represented “a much-needed breakthrough and a stepping stone in the transition to a climate neutral and circular economy” but stated that greenhouse emissions in the transport, building and agriculture sectors are high and on a rising trend. It suggested “there is scope for improvement in...reducing greenhouse emissions, increasing the share of renewables, energy efficiency and poverty reduction”.

The independent Needs Analysis for ERDF and ESF+ in Ireland (2020) also identified the need to accelerate progress to address climate change objectives and the green economy. Potential for development was identified in various sectors, including investment to enhance the energy efficiency of the building stock, to reduce waste, to promote the circular economy and to reduce the use of private transport, while noting that “this will require a range of policies and a scale of resources outside of the scope of the [ERDF] funds.”

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021 recognizes the scale of the climate challenge and increases the ambition to “support Ireland’s transition to Net Zero and achieve a climate neutral economy by no later than 2050”. The Climate Action Plan 2021 [‘CAP21’] provides a sectoral roadmap for meeting Ireland’s 2050 national climate objective. CAP21 estimates that €125 billion of capital investment (additional and reallocated) in low-carbon technologies and infrastructure will be required in the period 2021 to 2030. This includes investment of €51 billion in transport and €35 billion in buildings. The largest incremental increases are foreseen in buildings (75%), energy (50%) and agriculture (50%).

CAP21 identifies significant public investment under the NDP, complemented by investment under the NRRP, the EU Just Transition Fund (JTF) and the ERDF but notes that relying solely on public funding “is neither affordable nor adequate to the scale of the challenge to be addressed” and identifies a role for private investment, regulation and taxation policy.

The scale of the investment required to meet climate action ambitions in the programme area is reflected in the decision to focus programme resources on one specific objective – promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (RSO2.1) – rather than attempting to spread the investment over multiple specific objectives. Simply put, while there are many other investment needs in the programme area under PO2, these will have to be met by other sources of public and private investment.

CAP21 identifies some of the other sources of investment that will support investment needs under PO2. Measures in the energy area, including those envisaged under RSO2.2 and RSO2.3, will be financed “through a variety of mechanisms in combination with private investment: direct Exchequer capital supports; displacing fossil fuel imports; the Public Service Obligation (PSO) Levy; and, in respect of investment in the regulated gas and electricity networks by the system operators, through network charges”. The NRRP commits €518 million towards decarbonising projects such as retrofitting, ecosystem resilience and regeneration, climate mitigation and adaptation, and green data systems (RSO2.1, RSO2.4, RSO2.7). The NDP and the NRRP commit significant funding towards Sustainable Urban Mobility (RSO2.8). EAFRD will continue to play a role in supporting resource efficiency and energy efficiency in agriculture, food and forestry sectors.

Timing is also a factor in the decision to focus on RSO2.1. While actions to promote the Circular Economy (RSO2.6) and to enhance biodiversity (RSO2.7) will be required in the programme area and are consistent with regional policy objectives, regional actions towards meeting these objectives are best delivered under two forthcoming national policy frameworks, not yet published. The “Whole-of-Government Circular Economy Strategy” will provide an overall national policy framework for the circular transition and will include measures to improve Ireland’s circularity performance above the EU average by 2030. Ireland’s “4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (2022- 2026)” has been drafted following a comprehensive review of national, European and international biodiversity policies and other relevant plans and strategies. It will take a “a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach” and will be finalised and published following a period of public consultation later this year.

Focusing investment on promoting energy efficiency is not intended to downplay the importance of addressing other areas of climate action, it simply recognizes that the Programme has limited resources and other sources of funding will have a role to play in delivering on the specific objectives under PO2. This focus remains aligned with the RSES, both of which emphasize that improving energy efficiency is vital to reduce energy consumption while improving economic growth. The supported actions also prioritise operations that respect the ‘energy efficiency first’ principle in support of objective of achieving a climate-neutral Union by 2050, as per recital 60 of Reg (EU) 2021/1060.

In assessing the actions to be supported under RSO2.1, it was important to consider how they would complement other investments and how they could build on lessons learnt under previous programmes. Some consideration was given to supporting actions to promote energy efficiency in public sector buildings. CAP21 includes plans for a Public Sector Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Programme to address all major building portfolios in the sector. The NRRP and NDP funding is supporting pathfinder projects and there are commitments to develop an EPC delivery vehicle for up to €1 billion of privately-funded EPCs in public buildings. However, there are very significant short-term barriers to be overcome, including developing mechanisms and guidance to support off-balance sheet treatment, capacity building in the public sector and supply-side issues, all of which would impact on absorption and programme delivery.

Instead, the focus will be supporting the regional delivery of the new National Retrofit Plan. This plan aims to reduce emissions from the Residential sector from 7 Mt CO₂ eq. in 2018 to between 3.5-4.5 Mt CO₂eq. in 2030.

The overarching need to improve the energy efficiency of the Southern Region’s residential sector is evident from the low levels of audited households to register a Building Energy Rating (BER) between “A” and “B”. Between 2009 and 2020, only 19 per cent of audited households in Ireland registered a BER between “A” and “B”, with the corresponding ratios for households based in the Southern Region – particularly in the Mid-West and South-East – notably low and in most cases below the State average.

The Southern Region’s challenge of improving household energy efficiency is also reflected in the fact that many households – particularly in rural based areas – continue to rely on solid fuels as their source of energy for their main space heating system . Between 2009 and 2020, 5% of the homes in Ireland – that were audited for a BER – noted that they used solid fuels as their main space heating fuel, with above average proportions predominantly registered in rural based areas across the Southern Region.

The decarbonisation of the Eastern and Midland Region’s residential market represents a significant development challenge, particularly considering its size in absolute terms. Although the Eastern and Midland Region – specifically in Dublin and the Mid-East – recorded above average proportions of households with a BER between “A” and “B”, these proportions continue to remain notably low in the more rural parts of the region. Households in Dublin and the Mid-East were generally not dependent on using solid fuels as their household’s heating fuel source.

Under the NRRP, the Government is working with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and the European Investment Bank to develop a retrofit loan guarantee scheme and associated low-cost residential retrofit loans. This will make comprehensive home energy efficiency upgrades more affordable to middle- and high-income households and noncorporate landlords. It will address a key investment need in the regions. However, it is

recognized that separate measures are required to support low-income households, particularly those at most risk of energy poverty.

The European Green Deal sets out the EU's climate and environmental goals to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and at the same time to ensure the transition is just and inclusive – leaving no one behind – and to address the risk of energy poverty to ensure a basic standard of living for all citizens. The extent of energy poverty in Ireland is significant irrespective of the indicators used for the assessment.

The ESRI “Energy Poverty and Deprivation in Ireland” report June 2022 evidenced that energy poverty (based on households spending more than 10% of disposal income on energy) in Ireland has increased from 13.2% in 2015/2016 to 29.4% as at April 2022. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities Arrears and Non-Payment of Account (NPA) Disconnections February 2021 Update showed that 240,000 electricity customers i.e., 11% of households and 112,833 gas customers i.e., 16% of householders were in arrears in February 2021 in Ireland. The CSO Statistics show that prior to the significant increase in energy prices as a result of the war in Ukraine, 10% of households in the Southern Region and 5.2% of households in the Eastern & Midlands Region went without heating at some stage in 2021. SEAI's domestic fuel comparison of energy costs reported that on average the cost of coal increased by 37%, oil by 78%, gas by 33% and electricity by 15% from April 2021 to April 2022. The ESRI advise that the increasing energy cost trend is likely to continue as wholesale energy prices continue to increase and estimate that if energy prices increase by a further 25% this will increase the number of households in energy poverty to 43% in Ireland. Addressing energy poverty is more important than ever and therefore a key investment need that this Programme seeks to address.

The actions will complement the retrofit loan guarantee scheme under the NRRP and actions under both the NRRP and the ESF+ programme will help build capacity within the retrofit sector. For example, the SOLAS Green Skills Action Programme is funded through the NRRP for 2021 and 2022. It is proposed to build on this through ESF+ on its completion, with provision of future green skills modules as a component of vocational training courses delivered through SOLAS and the ETBs to be funded through ESF+ from 2023.

Priority 3: SUSTAINABLE AND INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Cities and urban centres are considered both the source of and the solution to many of the key challenges the world is facing today such as environmental issues and climate change, digital revolution, demographic changes, migration and social inequalities. In Europe, urban areas are home to over two-thirds of the EU's population, they account for about 80 % of energy use and generate up to 85 % of Europe's GDP. Urban areas are also the engines of the European economy, hubs of creativity and innovation. They add value and act as centres contributing to the development of their wider regions and rural hinterlands and contribute balanced territorial development of the EU but face significant challenges.

Reg (EU) 2021/1058 [‘the ERDF regulation’] provides for an increased focus on sustainable urban development through the support of integrated strategies to more effectively tackle the economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges affecting urban areas, with a minimum target of 8% of the ERDF resources allocated at national level for that purpose.

Project Ireland 2040 is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the period 2021 to 2030, the NDP, and the 20-year National Planning Framework (NPF). In line with the NPF and NDP, the RSES and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) / Strategic Growth Centre Plans set a 12-year statutory strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development of the Regions in pursuit of balanced regional development.

Each RSES recognises the strategic role played by our urban settlements, building on Cities and Metropolitan Areas, Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns and our urban settlement networks as centres for population and employment growth to drive economic growth in the Regions. Regional Policy Objectives in each RSES support active land management and actions to address sustainable urban development, and the principles of ‘Compact Growth’.

The Government's overarching strategy for the renewal and regeneration of towns in Ireland - 'Town Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns' was formally launched in February 2022. The policy was a priority commitment of the 'Programme for Government - Our Shared Future' and was developed jointly by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

'Housing for All' (HfA 2021) is the Government's ten-year Housing Plan for Ireland comprising four pillars to deliver increased housing provision nationally. Pillar number 4 targets measures to increase the use of existing under-utilised building stock to create new homes. The pillar specifically references harnessing the ERDF to address clear problems of dereliction and vacancy in our towns and to provide measures to regenerate them into viable uses as part of the TCF policy (Objective 19.4 of HfA).

The aesthetic decline of the towns in our region are a blight both visually and economically, preventing or limiting strategic measures in public investment aimed at the wider regeneration of the urban area or town involved.

Several reports and sources have highlighted the extent of the urban degeneration. For example, the GeoDirectory Residential and Commercial Buildings database captures vacancy rates for residential and commercial properties, along with a NACE classification of the economic use of commercial properties as well as information on derelict dwellings (updated quarterly). The latest GeoDirectory Commercial Property Report found an overall commercial vacancy rate of 13.6% in Q2 2021 and some 90,000 of the overall stock of just over 2 million homes to be vacant, and a further 22,000 properties are derelict.

An integrated and strategic approach to the regeneration of towns in the programme area is required to address complex societal problems, taking into consideration a range of recommended initiatives to progress the achievement of national, regional and local objectives for urban regeneration and compact growth. This approach is in line with the New European Bauhaus initiative and offers the potential to realize beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive projects through the Programme. An allocation of just under 15% of total programme resources has been made to PO5 to reflect the scale of investment required to address the challenge of urban regeneration within towns in the programme area.

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This is an ambitious Programme and will require significant capacity building to ensure strong governance and effective programme implementation. The MA has worked closely with our intermediate bodies, e.g., Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland and the Higher Education Authority, in the design of the Programme and will continue to work with them in the design and implementation of effective and efficient Management and Control Systems. Technical Assistance will be used: (i) to support skills development for beneficiaries, intermediate bodies, partners and the MA; (ii) to procure external expertise when required; (iii) to develop the electronic data exchange and collection systems required under the CPR; and (iv) to retain additional staff to ensure that Managing Authorities have sufficient resources to manage the Regional Programmes, as recommended in CR2019.

1. Programme strategy: main challenges and policy responses

Table 1

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
1. A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity	RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	<p>Ireland’s new Smart Specialisation Strategy high level strategic goals include using Smart Specialisation to: improve research and innovation capacity in Ireland’s regions; encourage more regionally dispersed RD&I, strengthen the enterprise base, and identify emerging areas of opportunity; increase the regional uptake of new advanced technologies; drive the development of skills needed for enhancing innovation activity; and encourage the maximising of sectoral strengths through clustering and the scaling of Ireland’s existing areas of research excellence.</p> <p>CR2019 identifies key priority investment areas for ERDF support under PO1 to effectively deliver on 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy. Investment is needed to enhance research and innovation capacities, strengthen innovation performance, prioritise smart specialisation areas, support clusters, and address regional differences in the research and development intensity. CR2020 states that relatively low levels of R&D investment are a continuing concern. The independent Needs Analysis for ERDF and ESF+ in Ireland 2020 identified the need for investments to address the scale of regional disparities, measures to support an increase in R&D expenditure, supports to increase collaboration between industry and the higher education sector and measures to promote Smart Regions.</p> <p>The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) for the Eastern & Midland Region (2019) and the Southern Region (2020) each identify developing the regions’ research and innovation capacity as a key strategic outcome. Each RSES emphasizes the importance of Smart Specialisation to the development of the region’s research, innovation, enterprise and human capital levels and to address regional disparities. RSO1.1 will address the recommendations of the Country Reports, the independent Needs Analysis, the RSES policy objectives and the S3 high level strategic goals.</p>
1. A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity	RSO1.3. Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments	<p>Ireland’s new Smart Specialisation Strategy identifies leveraging and building on the analysis of Irish regions’ strengths and emerging areas of opportunity undertaken as part of the development of Ireland’s S3 and addressing gaps in existing regional innovation infrastructures and systems by supporting projects aligned with the nine Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs) as key to delivery on the S3 high level strategic goals of encouraging more regionally dispersed RD&I, strengthening the enterprise base and identifying emerging areas of opportunity.</p> <p>CR2019 identifies key priority investment areas for ERDF support under PO1 to effectively deliver on 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy. Investment is needed to enhance the competitiveness and growth of Irish-owned</p>

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
		<p>SMEs, strengthen innovation performance, prioritise smart specialisation areas, support clusters, and address regional differences in the research and development intensity. CR2020 acknowledges some progress with more to do.</p> <p>The independent Needs Analysis for ERDF and ESF+ in Ireland 2020 identified the need for investments to address the scale of regional disparities, measures to support an increase in R&D expenditure, supports to increase collaboration between industry and the higher education sector and measures to promote Smart Regions. The RSES for the Southern Region sets out an economic vision for the region based on “five economic principles of smart specialisation, clustering, placemaking for enterprise development, knowledge diffusion, and capacity building”.</p> <p>The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region’s preferred economic strategy promotes “smart specialisation strategies based on identified strengths and competitive advantages, combined with cluster policies that promote economies of scale and network effects in certain locations”. RSO1.3 will address the recommendations of the Country Reports, the independent Needs Analysis, the RSES policy objectives and the S3 high level strategic goals.</p>
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions</p>	<p>CR2020 identifies scope for improvement in reducing greenhouse emissions, energy efficiency and poverty reduction. The independent Needs Analysis for ERDF & ESF+ in Ireland (2020) identified the potential investment to enhance the energy efficiency of building stock. The scale of the investment required to meet climate action ambitions in the programme area is significant and CAP21 estimates that Ireland will require investments in buildings of €35 billion to assist in meeting our transition to Net Zero and climate neutrality by 2050.</p> <p>This investment will need to be met from many sources but given the limited resources available under the Programme and to create the greatest impact our decision is to focus these limited resources on one specific objective - promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (RSO2.1).</p> <p>The overarching need to improve the energy efficiency of the Southern Region’s residential sector is evident from the low levels of audited households to register a Building Energy Rating (BER) between “A” and “B”. Between 2009 and 2020, only 19 per cent of audited households in Ireland registered a BER between “A” and “B”, with the corresponding ratios for households based in the Southern Region – particularly in the Mid-West and South-East – notably low and in most cases below the State average.</p> <p>Under the NRRP, the Government is working with the SBCI and the European Investment Bank to develop a retrofit loan guarantee scheme and associated low-cost residential retrofit loans to make energy efficiency</p>

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
		<p>upgrades more affordable for middle and high income households and noncorporate landlords. However, it is recognized that separate measures are required to support low-income households, particularly those at most risk of energy poverty who are not in a position to contribute to the cost of energy efficiency measures or with the repayment capacity to fund borrowing for energy efficiency measures.</p> <p>The ERSI “Energy Poverty and Deprivation in Ireland” report June 2022 evidenced that energy poverty (based on households spending more than 10% of disposal income on energy) in Ireland has increased from 13.2% in 2015/2016 to 29.4% as at April 2022 and estimate that if energy prices increase by a further 25% then the number of households in energy poverty will increase to 43%.</p>
<p>5. A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives</p>	<p>RSO5.1. Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism, and security in urban areas</p>	<p>To ensure the harmonious development of urban areas as well as non-urban areas, the ERDF Regulation EU 2021 /1058 provides under policy objective 5 for support to be delivered in an integrated manner to the economic, social and environmental development of regions based on cross-sectoral territorial strategies using integrated territorial development tools. Furthermore, when developing urban areas, special attention is required to be paid to supporting functional urban areas due to their importance in triggering cooperation between local authorities and partners across administrative borders as well as strengthening urban-rural linkages.</p> <p>The need to address competitiveness and attractiveness of our urban centres was captured in the independent Needs Analysis for ERDF and ESF+ Project Ireland 2040 is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the period 2021 to 2030, the National Development Plan (NDP), and the 20-year National Planning Framework (NPF). In line with the NPF and NDP, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) / Strategic Growth Centre Plans set a 12-year statutory strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development of the Regions in pursuit of balanced regional development. Each RSES recognises the strategic role played by our urban settlements, building on Cities and Metropolitan Areas, Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns and our urban settlement networks as centres for population and employment growth to drive economic growth in the Regions. Regional Policy Objectives in each RSES support active land management and actions to address the principles of ‘Compact Growth’ and urban regeneration.</p> <p>RSO5.1 will provide for a place-based, flexible, innovative and integrated response to addressing Sustainable Urban Development, consistent with local and regional plans and with the national policy framework of Town Centre First.</p>

* Dedicated priorities according to ESF+ Regulation

2. Priorities

Reference: Article 22(2) and point (c) of Article 22(3) CPR

2.1. Priorities other than technical assistance

2.1.1. Priority: SEM1. Smarter and More Competitive Regions

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies (ERDF)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The following types of action will be taken under this priority to develop and enhance research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies in the programme area. Selection of operations will be tailored to regional needs and will support investments that are in line with the S3 strategy and the seven Regional Enterprise Plans within the programme area. The development of Regional Enterprise Plans has been done in parallel with the creation of the S3. The stakeholder consultation undertaken as part of the development of these Regional Enterprise Plans has acted as an entrepreneurial discovery process which has contributed valuable insights to the S3 for Ireland.

Capacity building within the new and emerging technological universities (TUs)

Action RSO1.1.1: Establish, strengthen and systemise the technological universities' research and innovation offices which support their academic staff and researchers and wider enterprise and community stakeholders within their regions. This will include developing researcher human capital in the technological universities, including staff development, recruitment, postgraduate training and supervision, networking, and more structured collaborative knowledge-transfer and mobility schemes. This action responds to S3 ambitions by strengthening the new TUs to be regional innovation leaders. It aims to build new and additional capacity to facilitate and enable knowledge transfer and S3 objectives. Supports will include but are not limited to, for example, incubator and research space, advisory and support services, assistance with product and/or market development, and work placements. Enhanced RD&I capabilities and work placements into enterprises will bring knowledge and expertise out to the regions and bring problems and challenges back in, an important enabling step in cultivating SME engagement and building a pipeline for further collaborative projects. Supported costs will include staffing costs, stipends, training and events, consultancy, small capital and equipment costs and indirect costs.

Action RSO1.1.2: Provide industry gateways with dedicated staff who work with industry to articulate company problems in a manner that can be addressed by the established expert base in each TU. Gateway staff will manage the interaction between enterprises and the technological university, help enterprises source funding where necessary, and ensure projects are delivered successfully and in an industry-friendly manner.

Capacity building within the regions' public research institutions

Action RSO1.1.3: Retain Technology Transfer specialists to help companies and investors to access new knowledge and expertise, to drive innovation through collaboration, and to identify and license new technologies and IP. These specialists will continue to develop the Technology Transfer System in public research institutions and will provide new resources to place a focus on developing spin out company opportunities.

Accelerating the translation of cutting-edge research into commercial applications at a regional level

Action RSO1.1.4: Establish a new "Smart Hub" model for regional innovation and entrepreneurial training. The model will integrate critical elements of a research and innovation (R&I) ecosystem with entrepreneurial approaches, thus accelerating time to market from research concept to spin-outs, new product introduction, licences and innovations. The new regional Smart Hubs for Entrepreneurial Research and Innovation will be established in key thematic areas aligned with the Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy and regional strategic priorities.

Supporting innovation diffusion, enterprise innovation and entrepreneurship in the regions

Action RSO1.1.5: Develop new immersive-based, needs-led innovation training programmes, closely aligned to S3 in the regions and capable of attracting high calibre individuals and inter-disciplinary teams who, through their immersion and observation of real needs in their immersive environment and the use of a design methodology, will be supported to generate product and process ideas, new IP and in some cases, the creation of high-potential-start-ups (HPSUs) from research. These programmes will build on existing international and national best practice connecting on multiple levels with the industry sector clusters in the regions. The approach is modelled on the success of an exemplar immersive needs-led innovation training programme in the medical devices sector in Galway.

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Strategic Procurement and Environmentally Sustainable Solutions

The Managing Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support actions under this Specific Objective, including professionalisation efforts to address capacity gaps. Beneficiaries will be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g., green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives will be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

The selection of projects will be made based on criteria that take into account the most environmentally sustainable solutions. These criteria shall be adapted to the nature of the intervention and applied as widely as possible.

Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Analysis

A DNSH analysis has been carried out at the level of the types of actions defined above and it has been determined that these actions would do no significant harm to environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The main target beneficiaries for the actions under RSO1.1 are the universities in the programme area, with a particular focus on the four new Technological Universities. Other potential beneficiaries include the remaining Institutes of Technology and other public Research Performing Organisations (RPOs).

The non-financial supports provided by the beneficiaries to enterprises in the regions will target Small and Medium Enterprises, including microenterprises, with some actions targeting the creation of spin-outs and high potential start-ups (HPSUs). Non-financial supports will also benefit some large indigenous enterprises and multinational companies in the regions as the beneficiaries have an important role to play in increasing the collaboration between indigenous enterprises and multinational companies in RD&I.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

In line with horizontal principles, the programme considers the EU Charter of fundamental rights gender equality, non-discrimination, including accessibility, as well as other Horizontal Enabling conditions of relevance throughout the whole programming cycle.

Stakeholders representing gender, equality, disability, immigrant, and minority groups have been included in the programme design stage through membership of the Partnership Process Steering Group and as part of the public consultations that have taken place.

The programme will adhere to the best practice recommendations during implementation of the programme, throughout the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programmes by ensuring that equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective are taken into account and promoted. Simultaneously, the programme will take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Ireland's "Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty" provides an important framework for implementing the horizontal principles. The assessment of equality and human rights issues required under the Duty provides

a key framework to assist in ensuring initiatives include the appropriate actions and processes necessary to fully respect the horizontal principles. The programme will have access to and make use of the Equality and Human Rights in CPR Programming Guidance Tool. The guidance tool was published in 2022 and provides a practical and bespoke support for Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiary Bodies under CPR programmes in Ireland which outlines compliance requirements under Irish national law as well as CPR adherence.

During implementation, key stakeholders such as human rights bodies will be represented on Programme Monitoring Committee. Funding calls involving public bodies will be subject to implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty through an assessment of the relevant equality and human rights issues and a review to ensure an adequate and appropriate response to issues.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

Supported actions will take place throughout the two NUT2 regions in the programme area. No territorial tools will be used under this specific objective.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

The creation of the Technological Universities is a powerful complement to the established universities which already perform strongly and impactfully at interregional, cross-border and transnational levels. Action RSO1.1.1 and Action RSO1.1.2 will empower these new institutions to realise their potential in their regions and beyond, building on their distinctive R&I capability and increasing their collaboration with enterprise.

These actions will help build a pipeline of R&I projects and investment, including for example, funding under Horizon Europe. Ireland's S3 identifies participation in the EU R&I framework programmes as the most effective mechanism for the Irish R&I community to collaborate with their counterparts in other countries. Ireland performed well under Horizon 2020, especially when adjusting for the size of our research base, submitting nearly 18,000 applications across all work programmes, with a success rate of 14.7% against an EU average of 12%. Irish SMEs were particularly successful, with nearly 5,000 applications securing over €300 million. The TU's increased R&I capacity and increased engagement with industry will allow them to play their part at a regional level in meeting the national target for Horizon Europe of €1.5 billion, as set out in Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy (2022). It also creates significant opportunities under Interrreg programmes, for example, Interreg North West Europe, Interreg Europe and PEACE Plus.

Action RSO1.1.3 will strengthen knowledge transfer across the entire HEI sector in the region and together with Action RSO1.1.4 and RSO1.1.5 will build capacity in the SME and HEI base to identify funding sources and to prepare professional and robust applications for competitive international R&D funds.

Collectively, the full suite of actions under RSO1.1 will help researchers and innovators here to work with the best globally, with a particular focus on existing European collaborations, and on advancing Ireland's international research and innovation footprint. They support Irish enterprises to adopt the latest advances in green and digital technological breakthroughs, leading to greater technological take-up and more HPSUs and spinouts with the ability to grow, scale and compete on international markets across Ireland's regions.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The selected form of support for all actions under PO1 is grants as none of the supported actions are expected to generate a return during their lifetime. The use of financial instruments would therefore not be feasible as a form of support and would not be attractive to potential beneficiaries.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	RCO01	Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	enterprises	1,164.00	6,356.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	RCO04	Enterprises with non-financial support	enterprises	1,164.00	6,356.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	RCO05	New enterprises supported	enterprises	41.00	256.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	RCO07	Research organisations participating in joint research projects	Research organisations	5.00	7.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	PSO01	Number of Fellows completing a needs-led innovation training programme	participants	24.00	212.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	RCR03	Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) introducing product or process innovation	enterprises	0.00	2021	1,671.00	Supported Projects	
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	RCR06	Patent applications submitted	patent applications	0.00	2021	11.00	Supported Project	
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	PSR01	Annual Number of Licences, Options and Assignments in funded HEIs	LOAs per annum	133.00	2021	157.00	Supported Project	
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	PSR02	Number of spin-outs created dependent on IP from the HEI	spin-outs	0	2021	12	Supported Project	
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	PSR03	Licensed Technologies	intellectual property licenses	0.00	2021	18.00	Supported Project	
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	PSR04	Assignments	assignments	0.00	2021	4.00	Supported Project	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	012. Research and innovation activities in public research centres, higher education and centres of competence including networking (industrial research, experimental development, feasibility studies)	71,937,247.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	028. Technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and higher education sector	16,890,000.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	Total			88,827,247.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	01. Grant	88,827,247.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	Total			88,827,247.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	88,827,247.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	Total			88,827,247.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM1	RSO1.1	ERDF	More developed	02. Gender mainstreaming	88,827,247.00
SEM1	RSO1.1	Total			88,827,247.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: RSO1.3. Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments (ERDF)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The following types of action (TOA) will be taken under this priority to enhance sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investment, in the regions and sub-regions of the programme area. Selection of operations will be tailored to regional needs and will support investments that are in line with the S3 strategy and the seven Regional Enterprise Plans within the programme area. These plans were developed in each region by a committee of key regional and national actors from Industry, Academia, Community and the Public Sector. Many of the actions proposed within these plans build on the existing regional strengths and on key industrial and academic infrastructure in each region. Where there is a clear need for new programmes or capital infrastructure to support the needs identified, the Programme aims to address these needs through the actions set out below and lay the foundation for delivery of results for future regional enterprise plans.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), engaging closely with the Regional Assemblies and with Enterprise Ireland, will commission further independent analysis at NUTS II level to identify opportunities and deficiencies in the regional enterprise ecosystem. This will strengthen the evidence-base for the selection of operations and the optimal allocation of ERDF funding during programme implementation.

Strengthening and developing functional regional ecosystems that support innovation diffusion, enterprise innovation and entrepreneurship in the regions

Action RSO1.3.1: Provide appropriate infrastructure and key staff resources to deliver innovative solutions including support programmes to support entrepreneurship, start-ups and scaling companies. This will include:

1.

1. delivery of small to medium scale regional projects (with minimum or no building requirements) or expansion of existing regional ecosystem projects
2. scoping and preparing new large-scale regional projects, e.g., design and planning, project development, recruitment of key managers
3. delivery of large-scale regional capital investment projects that provide key strategic infrastructural solutions to support the regional ecosystem

- This action will be delivered through competitive calls with specific funding strands for small and medium sized projects and larger-scale capital projects. Regional strengthening projects will generally be small or medium sized, while strategic change projects will be large-scale in nature.
- Small and medium sized projects will involve the delivery of small to medium scale regional strengthening activities with minimum or no building requirements or expansion of existing regional ecosystem projects. These projects will provide appropriate infrastructure and key staff resources to deliver innovative solutions including support programmes to provide impetus for entrepreneurship, start-ups and scaling companies. Projects of this scale will also be supported to carry out preparatory work for new large-scale regional projects, e.g., design and planning, project development, recruitment of key managers.
- Larger-scale capital projects will involve delivery of significant regionally based capital investment projects that provide key strategic infrastructural solutions to support the regional innovation ecosystem. The scope of such strategic change projects may be inter-regional and national exemplar facilities and Centres of Excellence based around and supported by regional industrial leaders. Such projects would provide additional incubation capacity and a physical base for collaborative industrial innovation projects, clustering, training and networking and should have national or potential international reach. Funding will support both capital investment (e.g., construction, refurbishment, fit-out) and non-capital investment (e.g., recruitment, staffing, consultancy, indirect costs, etc.).
- This action will be targeted at strategic regional locations where an identifiable deficit exists in key infrastructure which is necessary to develop functional regional ecosystems which can support this client base. Competitive funding calls will include a strong requirement to demonstrate the need for the proposed capital intervention, at a regional and national level and aligned with S3 and the Regional Enterprise Plans. The specific evaluation criteria will require each case to demonstrate evidence of this need, along with

evidence of widespread regional support and collaboration. Evidence of viability and durability of the proposed capital project, its innovation intensity and extent of incubator services proposed will also be evaluated in the selection process.

- The degree of justification required for large scale strategic change projects may in itself require the support of consultants, architects, academics, etc. to validate the economic need for and the case for viability of the proposed capital project. To that end it is proposed to offer support for a scoping study to support substantial project development of such potential large-scale projects. This will assist the project team to prepare and justify the case for evaluation at a subsequent competitive call and support development of a pipeline of potential large-scale projects over the duration of the funding allocation.
- Projects must be collaborative in nature, they must be innovative, viable and sustainable with metrics and KPI's which provide additionality to the existing regional infrastructure.
- Projects will complement the solutions provided by the existing regional providers including higher education institutions, state agencies and private sector entities at a regional level.

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Strategic Procurement and Environmentally Sustainable Solutions

The Managing Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support actions under this Specific Objective, including professionalisation efforts to address capacity gaps. Beneficiaries will be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g., green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives will be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

The selection of projects will be made based on criteria that take into account the most environmentally sustainable solutions. These criteria shall be adapted to the nature of the intervention and applied as widely as possible.

Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Analysis

A DNSH analysis has been carried out at the level of the types of actions defined above and it has been determined that these actions would do no significant harm to environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The main target beneficiaries for the actions under RSO1.3 are groups and clusters of SMEs that are involved in a collaborative proposal with other local and regional stakeholders, to build and improve regional innovation ecosystems. Funding of these clusters will typically be delivered through Designated Activity Companies (DACs) - not-for profit entities that are established to develop and deliver these collaborative proposals and projects.

The other local and regional stakeholders may include industry groups, community development groups and public bodies, such as Local Authorities, Higher Education Institutes and other agencies of the State.

The non-financial supports provided by the beneficiaries to enterprises in the regions will target small and medium enterprises, in particular start-ups and scaling companies.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Please refer to details already provided under 'Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation' under RSO1.1.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

Supported actions will take place throughout the two NUT2 regions in the programme area. No territorial tools will be used under this specific objective.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

Action RSO1.3.1 will see regionally based SME businesses working collaboratively with other partners to embrace digitisation, green economy opportunities, and relevant technological advances. In doing so, it will improve their competitiveness and potential for growth and internationalisation. Action RSO1.3.1 supports the identification of regional sectoral strengths, capabilities and opportunities through the Regional Enterprise Plans and will provide an important platform for future cluster development initiatives. These clusters can maximise the development of international business linkages at EU level and beyond, on a cluster-to-cluster basis including through EU Strategic Value Chains and associated Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI) and through the development of all-island and cross-border clusters.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The selected form of support for all actions under PO1 is grants as none of the supported actions are expected to generate a return during their lifetime. The use of financial instruments would therefore not be feasible as a form of support and would not be attractive to potential beneficiaries.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	RCO01	Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	enterprises	288.00	2,304.00
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	RCO04	Enterprises with non-financial support	enterprises	288.00	2,304.00
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	RCO05	New enterprises supported	enterprises	72.00	576.00
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	RCO15	Capacity of incubation created	enterprises	40.00	1,152.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	RCR03	Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) introducing product or process innovation	enterprises	0.00	2021	1,152.00	Supported Project	
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	RCR18	SMEs using incubator services after incubator creation	enterprises/year	0.00	2021	1,037.00	Supported Project	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	026. Support for innovation clusters including between businesses, research organisations and public authorities and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs	45,850,445.00
SEM1	RSO1.3	Total			45,850,445.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	01. Grant	45,850,445.00
SEM1	RSO1.3	Total			45,850,445.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	45,850,445.00
SEM1	RSO1.3	Total			45,850,445.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
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Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM1	RSO1.3	ERDF	More developed	02. Gender mainstreaming	45,850,445.00
SEM1	RSO1.3	Total			45,850,445.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1. Priority: SEM2. Low-Carbon Energy Efficient Regions

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (ERDF)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The following types of action will be taken under this priority to promote energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the programme area.

Improving the energy efficiency of residential homes and reducing the risk and prevalence of energy poverty in our regions

Action RSO2.1.1: Support the delivery of energy efficiency renovations free of charge to owner-occupied lower-income households who meet the defined eligibility criteria and who are in, or are vulnerable to, energy poverty. This action will use learnings from similar actions in the 2014-2020 programming period and will:

retrofit homes with the aim to achieve, on average, at least a medium-depth level renovation
pilot the installation of heat pumps in existing premises, to replace older less efficient heating systems
gather evidence from the pilot to inform the appropriate process and approach to increasing the number of B2 upgrades and heat pump installations going forward
provide an evidence base to improve the targeting of energy efficiency schemes
examine the impact of retrofitting on alleviating energy poverty

ERDF resources will be focused on “Deep Heat Renovations” to include attic insulation, cavity insulation, external and internal wall insulation, new heating systems and where appropriate replacement windows, draught proofing, lagging jackets and energy efficient lighting. The exact measures will be based on a technical assessment of each property. Resource efficient building materials and recycling building materials will be encouraged where feasible.

Selection of eligible properties will be prioritised based firstly on applications received prior to 14th February 2022 and then by worst performing BER of E, F and G homes built before 1995 with an objective to concentrate resources on the properties where the greatest impact can be achieved. Pre-works and post-works BERs will be required for all homes renovated in order to ensure the reliability and accuracy of indicator data.

Learning from the Interreg Europe EMPOWER project will also be used to support the evaluation of impact on energy poverty.

The Managing Authority will establish a Communications Working Group to include the ERDF Communications Officers from both Regional Programmes together with representatives of DECC and the beneficiary to agree on an approach and action plan to improving the visibility of ERDF supports.

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Strategic Procurement and Environmentally Sustainable Solutions

The Managing Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support actions under this Specific Objective, including professionalisation efforts to address capacity gaps. Beneficiaries will be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g., green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives will be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

The selection of projects will be made based on criteria that take into account the most environmentally sustainable solutions. These criteria shall be adapted to the nature of the intervention and applied as widely as possible.

Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Analysis

A DNSH analysis has been carried out at the level of the types of actions defined above and it has been determined that these actions would do no significant harm to environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The target beneficiary of ERDF funding under RSO2.1 will be a public body or bodies responsible for energy efficiency in residential buildings at national, regional or local level. Funding is likely to be awarded through non-competitive calls and will use public procurement to deliver the supported actions at scale within the programme area.

Energy efficiency works will be carried out by a panel of contractors, which may include both SMEs and community-based organisations. This panel will be appointed following a public procurement process. The scale up of investment will support job creation in SMEs and community-based organisations in the programme area.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the actions supported will be lower income homeowners in the programme area who are in, or are vulnerable to, energy poverty. The criteria for qualifying homeowners will be kept under review and may be modified during the lifetime of the programme to support optimal targeting of households vulnerable to energy poverty.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Please refer to details already provided under 'Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation' under RSO1.1.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

Supported actions will take place throughout the two NUT2 regions in the programme area. No territorial tools will be used under this specific objective.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

The design, implementation and evaluation of Action RSO2.1.1 provide significant opportunities for interregional, cross-border and transnational learning and collaborative projects. Action RSO2.1.1 can build on learning from current Interreg projects, for example the Interreg Europe EMPOWER project, and it will create opportunities for new transnational projects under Interreg and other EU programmes.

The Managing Authority will be working with key actors at local, regional and national level, including SEAI. SEAI is the EU Horizon 2020 national delegate for Societal Challenge 3 – Secure, Clean & Efficient Energy where their role is to identify research priorities in Europe and also represent Ireland at international fora, including the Energy Agency, EU and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This opens up opportunities to collaborate with these actors on a range of design, implementation and evaluation activities and to promote the adoption of the latest advances in green and digital technology.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The selected form of support is grants. While a financial instrument will be used under the NRRP to make comprehensive home energy efficiency upgrades more affordable to middle- and high-income households and noncorporate landlords, this form of support is not considered suitable for low-income households at risk of energy poverty. Government policy is to provide free home energy upgrades for this category of homeowner.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
SEM2	RSO2.1	ERDF	More developed	RCO18	Dwellings with improved energy performance	dwellings	788.00	3,942.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
SEM2	RSO2.1	ERDF	More developed	RCR26	Annual primary energy consumption (of which: dwellings, public buildings, enterprises, other)	MWh/year	149,741.00	2019	85,500.00	SEAI	Savings are estimated on the basis of calculated EPC (BER) values for both baseline and savings.
SEM2	RSO2.1	ERDF	More developed	RCR29	Estimated greenhouse emissions	tonnes CO2 eq./year	32,043.00	2019	18,542.00	SEAI	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM2	RSO2.1	ERDF	More developed	042. Energy efficiency renovation of existing housing stock, demonstration projects and supporting measures compliant with energy efficiency criteria	79,643,250.00
SEM2	RSO2.1	Total			79,643,250.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM2	RSO2.1	ERDF	More developed	01. Grant	79,643,250.00
SEM2	RSO2.1	Total			79,643,250.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM2	RSO2.1	ERDF	More developed	33. Other approaches - No territorial targeting	79,643,250.00
SEM2	RSO2.1	Total			79,643,250.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
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Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM2	RSO2.1	ERDF	More developed	03. Gender neutral	79,643,250.00
SEM2	RSO2.1	Total			79,643,250.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1. Priority: SEM3. Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: RSO5.1. Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism, and security in urban areas (ERDF)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The following types of action (TOA) will be taken under this priority to foster integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism, and security in urban areas within the programme area.

Supporting locally lead and locally selected projects that take an integrated strategic approach to the regeneration of our towns, using a Town Centre First Health Check framework to gather data, develop action plans and lead actions on regeneration.

Action RSO5.1.1: Prepare integrated urban regeneration action plans / masterplans (either using procured multi disciplinary service or short term contract within the Local Authority for required skills) which identify projects and initiatives tackling town centre regeneration, placemaking, vacancy and dereliction

Action RSO5.1.2: Deliver pilot and pathfinder projects for selected towns (priority for Key Towns and Regional Growth Centres listed in the RSEs) tackling town centre regeneration, placemaking, vacancy and dereliction. This will involve capital investment and may include public realm improvement projects.

The relevant Local Authority in which the town is located will be responsible for the production of the plans identified in Action RSO5.1.1 above. These plans will meet the requirements of integrated territorial strategies as defined in CPR Article 29. The plans will be prepared in collaboration with the local community through direct engagement and through undertaking research and analysis of the town. Expertise from across multiple policy areas will be used in the development of the plans, including, housing, planning, conservation, sustainable urban design, building vacancy, environmental, community and economic development.

Pilot and pathfinder projects will be selected by the Local Authorities on the basis of their readiness to commence and those that are at an advanced stage in the Town Centre First process i.e., data gathering and analysis phase complete and/or Towns Centre First plans already developed and/or Town Teams already in place. These pilot and pathfinder projects will assist in informing the approach for other towns at earlier stages in the process and who have historically demonstrated a lower capacity to leverage investment opportunities.

The Managing Authority will work closely with the DHLGH, the relevant Regional and Local Authorities, the Town Teams and local communities to ensure visibility of EU funds in the selected towns and the wider region. This will include capacity building and communications support.

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Strategic Procurement and Environmentally Sustainable Solutions

The Managing Authority will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support actions under this Specific Objective, including professionalisation efforts to address capacity gaps. Beneficiaries will be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g., green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives will be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

The selection of projects will be made based on criteria that take into account the most environmentally sustainable solutions. These criteria shall be adapted to the nature of the intervention and applied as widely as possible.

New European Bauhaus

The New European Bauhaus initiative connects the European Green Deal to our daily lives and living spaces. It calls on all Europeans to imagine and build together a sustainable and inclusive future that is beautiful for our

eyes, minds, and souls. The type of actions set out above are in line with the New European Bauhaus initiative and provide opportunities to realize beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive projects through the Programme.

Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Analysis

A DNSH analysis has been carried out at the level of the types of actions defined above and it has been determined that these actions would do no significant harm to environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The main target beneficiaries for the actions under RSO5.1 are Local Authorities with primary responsibility for sustainable and integrated urban development and implementation of the Town Centre First policy in the selected towns within the programme area.

Local Authorities will work with other local and regional stakeholders to develop and deliver integrated urban development strategies and associated operations, including private citizens, local enterprises, industry groups, community development groups, property owners and public bodies.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Please refer to details already provided under 'Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation' under RSO1.1.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

Supported actions will be targeted towards key towns and regional growth centres in the two NUT2 regions in the programme area. Integrated territorial strategies will be used under this specific objective. These will take the form of "territorial tool supporting initiatives designed by the Member State" pursuant to point (c) of Article 28 CPR.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

The main target beneficiaries for Action RSO5.1.1 – Local Authorities in the programme area – have been actively involved in over 100 interregional, cross-border and transnational projects during the current programming period as partners and stakeholders including Interreg Ireland/Wales, Interreg Europe, Interreg Atlantic Area, Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic, Interreg North West Europe, Creative Europe, Horizon 2020, URBACT III, ESPON and EU Life.

Many of these projects, e.g., Rediscovering Ancient Connections, Murals for Communities, MMIAH, Playful Paradigm, PLACE-EE, Health&Greenspace, Go Green Routes, Celtic Routes and GeoLife, focused on improving placemaking, town centres and regeneration. The knowledge, expertise and innovations gained by the beneficiaries through their past participation in these projects together with their future participation in similar projects will support interregional, cross-border and transnational learning and activities.

In addition, the involvement of multiple actors in the creation of the integrated urban strategies at the heart of this action creates opportunities to collaborate with these actors and transnational actors on a range of design, implementation and evaluation activities throughout the lifetime of the programme.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The selected form of support for all actions under PO5 is grants. None of the supported actions are expected to generate a return. The use of financial instruments would therefore not be feasible as a form of support and would not be attractive to potential beneficiaries.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	RCO75	Strategies for integrated territorial development supported	contributions to strategies	7.00	14.00
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	RCO76	Integrated projects for territorial development	projects	0.00	14.00
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	RCO114	Open space created or rehabilitated in urban areas	square metres	0.00	62,704.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	PSR05	Perceived impact of supported projects on revitalisation of town centre	Score (-5 to +5)	0.00	2022	3.00	Survey	A survey will be designed to measure the perceived impact (positive and negative) of supported projects on the revitalisation of the town centre. The score will be supplemented by qualitative data to aid evaluation.

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	168. Physical regeneration and security of public spaces	33,609,515.00
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	169. Territorial development initiatives, including preparation of territorial strategies	2,520,000.00
SEM3	RSO5.1	Total			36,129,515.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	01. Grant	36,129,515.00
SEM3	RSO5.1	Total			36,129,515.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	18. Other type of territorial tool - Cities, towns and suburbs	36,129,515.00
SEM3	RSO5.1	Total			36,129,515.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
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Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
SEM3	RSO5.1	ERDF	More developed	03. Gender neutral	36,129,515.00
SEM3	RSO5.1	Total			36,129,515.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.2. Technical Assistance Priorities

3. Financing plan

Reference: points (g)(i), (ii) and (iii) of Article 22(3), Article 112(1), (2) and (3), and Articles 14 and 26 CPR

3.1. Transfers and contributions (1)

Reference: Articles 14, 26 and 27 CPR

Programme amendment related to	<input type="checkbox"/> contribution to InvestEU
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer to instruments under direct or indirect management
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer between ERDF, ESF+, Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds

(1) Applicable only to programme amendments in accordance with Articles 14 and 26 except complementary transfers to the JTF in accordance with Article 27 CPR. Transfers shall not affect the annual breakdown of financial appropriations at the MFF level for a Member State.

Table 15A: Contributions to InvestEU* (breakdown by year)

Contribution from		Contribution to	Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	InvestEU window	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

* For each new request for contribution, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts for each year by Fund and by category of region.

Table 15B: Contributions to InvestEU* (summary)

Fund	Category of region	Sustainable Infrastructure (a)	Innovation and Digitisation (b)	SME (c)	Social Investment and Skills (d)	Total (e)=(a)+(b)+(c)+(d)
Total						

* Cumulative amounts for all contributions done through programme amendments during the programming period. With each new request for contribution, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts for each year by Fund and by category of region.

Justification, taking into account how those amounts contribute to the achievement of policy objectives selected in the programme in accordance with Article 10(1) of the InvestEU Regulation

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Table 16A: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management (breakdown by year)

Transfers from		Transfers to	Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	Instrument	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

Table 16B: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management* (summary)

Fund	Category of region	Total
Total		

* Cumulative amounts for all transfers done through programme amendments during programming period. With each new request for transfer, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts transferred for each year by Fund and by category of region.

Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management - Justification

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Table 17A: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds* (breakdown by year)

Transfers from		Transfers to		Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

* Transfer to other programmes. Transfers between ERDF and ESF+ can only be done within the same category of region.

Table 17B: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds (summary)

	ERDF			ESF+			CF	EMFAF	AMIF	ISF	BMVI	Total
	More developed	Transition	Less developed	More developed	Transition	Less developed						
Total												

* Cumulative amounts for all transfers done through programme amendments during the programming period. With each new request for transfer, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts transferred for each year by Fund and category of region.

Transfers between shared management funds, including between cohesion policy funds - Justification

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3.2. JTF: allocation in the programme and transfers (1)

3.3. Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review

Table 19A: Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review within the programme (breakdown by year)

Transfers from	Transfers to	Breakdown by year			
Category of region*	Category of region*	2025	2026	2027	Total

* Applicable to ERDF and ESF+ only

Table 19B: Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review, to other programmes (breakdown by year)

Transfers from	Transfers to	Breakdown by year			
Category of region*	Category of region*	2025	2026	2027	Total

* Applicable to ERDF and ESF+ only

3.4. Transfers back (1)

Table 20A: Transfers back (breakdown by year)

Transfers from	Transfers to		Breakdown by year							
InvestEU or other Union instrument	Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

(1) Applicable only to programme amendments for resources transferred back from other Union instruments, including elements of AMIF, ISF and BMVI, under direct or indirect management, or from InvestEU.

Table 20B: Transfers back* (summary)

From	To						Cohesion Fund
InvestEU / Instrument	ERDF			ESF+			
	More developed	Transition	Developed	More developed	Transition	Developed	

* Cumulative amounts for all transfers done through programme amendments during programming period. With each new request for transfer, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts transferred for each year by Fund and by category of region.

3.5. Financial appropriations by year

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 3, 4 and 7 JTF Regulation

Table 10: Financial appropriations by year

Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026		2027		Total
							Financial appropriation without flexibility amount	Flexibility amount	Financial appropriation without flexibility amount	Flexibility amount	
ERDF*	More developed		44,762,340.00	45,547,559.00	46,348,811.00	47,166,082.00	19,200,597.00	19,200,597.00	21,625,748.00	21,625,748.00	265,477,482.00
Total ERDF			44,762,340.00	45,547,559.00	46,348,811.00	47,166,082.00	19,200,597.00	19,200,597.00	21,625,748.00	21,625,748.00	265,477,482.00
Total			44,762,340.00	45,547,559.00	46,348,811.00	47,166,082.00	19,200,597.00	19,200,597.00	21,625,748.00	21,625,748.00	265,477,482.00

* Amounts after the complementary transfer to the JTF.

3.6. Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing
Reference: point (g)(ii) of Article 22(3), Article 22(6) and Article 36 CPR

For the Investment for jobs and growth goal: programmes using technical assistance according to Article 36(5) CPR in accordance with the choice made in the Partnership Agreement

Table 11: Total financial allocations by fund and national contribution

Policy / JTF specific objective number or technical assistance	Priority	Basis for calculation Union support	Fund	Category of region*	Union contribution (a)=(b)+(c)+(i)+(j)	Breakdown of Union contribution				National contribution (d)=(e)+(f)	Indicative breakdown of national contribution		Total (g)=(a)+(d)	Co-financing rate (h)=(a)/(g)
						Union contribution		Flexibility amount			Public (e)	Private (f)		
						without technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) (b)	for technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) (c)	without technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) (i)	for technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) (j)					
1	SEM1	Public	ERDF	More developed	142,758,353.00	113,966,339.00	6,837,980.00	20,711,353.00	1,242,681.00	214,137,530.00	214,137,530.00		356,895,883.00	39.9999999440%
2	SEM2	Public	ERDF	More developed	84,421,844.00	67,395,346.00	4,043,720.00	12,247,904.00	734,874.00	126,632,768.00	126,632,768.00		211,054,612.00	39.9999996210%
5	SEM3	Public	ERDF	More developed	38,297,285.00	30,573,352.00	1,834,400.00	5,556,163.00	333,370.00	57,445,929.00	57,445,929.00		95,743,214.00	39.9999993733%
Total			ERDF	More developed	265,477,482.00	211,935,037.00	12,716,100.00	38,515,420.00	2,310,925.00	398,216,227.00	398,216,227.00		663,693,709.00	39.9999997589%
Grand total					265,477,482.00	211,935,037.00	12,716,100.00	38,515,420.00	2,310,925.00	398,216,227.00	398,216,227.00		663,693,709.00	39.9999997589%

* For ERDF and ESF+: less developed, transition, more developed, and, where applicable special allocation for outermost and northern sparsely populated regions. For Cohesion Fund: not applicable. For technical assistance, application of categories of region depends on the selection of the fund.

** Indicate the total JTF resources, including the complementary support transferred from the ERDF and the ESF+. The table shall not include the amounts in accordance to Article 7 JTF Regulation. In case of technical assistance financed from the JTF, the JTF resources should be split into resources related to Articles 3 and 4 JTF Regulation. For Article 4 JTF Regulation, there is no flexibility amount.

4. Enabling conditions

Reference: point (i) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 12: Enabling conditions

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
1. Effective monitoring mechanisms of the public procurement market			Yes	Monitoring mechanisms are in place that cover all public contracts and their procurement under the Funds in line with Union procurement legislation. That requirement includes: 1. Arrangements to ensure compilation of effective and reliable data on public procurement procedures above the Union thresholds in accordance with reporting obligations under Articles 83 and 84 of Directive 2014/24/EU and Articles 99 and 100 of Directive 2014/25/EU.	Yes	<p>National Public Procurement Policy Framework</p> <p>https://ogp.gov.ie/national-public-procurement-policy-framework/</p> <p>National Public Procurement Guidelines on Goods and Services</p> <p>https://ogp.gov.ie/public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/www.eTenders.gov.ie</p> <p>Capital Works Management Framework</p> <p>https://constructionprocurement.gov.ie/</p> <p>DPER circular 13/2015</p> <p>https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/2b0103e70fec4127983d2c1e60e0546d/ This will be updated for 21-27 period.</p>	<p>The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) has responsibility for developing and setting out the overarching policy framework for public procurement in Ireland.</p> <p>The National Public Procurement Guidelines outline the responsibilities of contracting authorities to comply with monitoring and reporting arrangements in line with EU procurement legislation.</p> <p>eTenders provides a central facility for advertisement of procurement opportunities and award notices across the public sector which is reported on by OGP.</p> <p>The CWMF is an integrated set of contractual provisions, guidance material and technical procedures which covers all aspects of the delivery process of a public works project from inception to final project delivery and review.</p> <p>As is noted in DPER circular 13/2015 on management and control procedures for ESIF, Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries are responsible for ensuring that projects and operations are in compliance with Procurement Guidelines and EU legislation.</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				2. Arrangements to ensure the data cover at least the following elements: a. Quality and intensity of competition: names of winning bidder, number of initial bidders and contractual value; b. Information on final price after completion and on participation of SMEs as direct bidders, where national systems provide such information.	Yes	https://ogp.gov.ie/public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/ https://www.etenders.gov.ie/Media/Default/SiteContent/LegislationGuides/Circular_10_-_14_0.pdf	<p>The National Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services set out these arrangements on page 72-73.</p> <p>Reports in relation to this directive are submitted to the Commission by the OGP as required.</p>
				3. Arrangements to ensure monitoring and analysis of the data by the competent national authorities in accordance with article 83 (2) of directive 2014/24/EU and article 99 (2) of directive 2014/25/EU.	Yes	www.eTenders.gov.ie Report of the Interim Procurement Reform Board	<p>OGP analyses the data captured on eTenders and prepares Article 83 and Article 99 reports to the European Commission as required.</p> <p>The Report of the Interim Procurement Reform Board is published regularly and contains additional information.</p>
				4. Arrangements to make the results of the analysis available to the public in accordance with article 83 (3) of directive 2014/24/EU and article 99 (3) directive 2014/25/EU.	Yes	Public Service Spend and Tendering Analysis https://ogp.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/OGP-2017-Public-Service-Spend-and-Tendering-Analysis.pdf Report of the Interim Procurement Reform Board	<p>Reports are published on the OGP website once finalised. The OGP also publishes an annual Spend and Tendering Analysis report.</p> <p>The Report of the Interim Procurement Reform Board is published regularly and contains additional information.</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				5. Arrangements to ensure that all information pointing to suspected bid-rigging situations is communicated to the competent national bodies in accordance with Article 83(2) of Directive 2014/24/EU and Article 99(2) of Directive 2014/25/EU.	Yes	https://ogp.gov.ie/public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/ https://www.ccpc.ie/business/help-for-business/guidelines-for-business/bid-rigging-what-you-need-to-know/	<p>Contracting Authorities must report suspected bid-rigging to the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (see p. 19 of guidelines)</p> <p>The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is an independent statutory body with a dual mandate to enforce competition and consumer protection law in Ireland. It regularly publishes information for consumers and businesses. For example, it recently published a “Business Guide on Bid Rigging”.</p> <p>Ireland’s Anti-Fraud Coordination Service (AFCOS) based in the EU and International Division of Dept of Finance are responsible for anti-fraud coordination for EU funds in Ireland.</p>
2. Tools and capacity for effective application of State aid rules			Yes	<p>Managing authorities have the tools and capacity to verify compliance with State aid rules:</p> <p>1. For undertakings in difficulty and undertakings under a recovery requirement.</p>	Yes	https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/EU-Internal-Market/EU-State-Aid-Rules/ <p>A list of undertakings under a recovery requirement is available at https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/index_en</p> <p>Published data on companies and registered charities (e.g., universities) will be consulted.</p>	<p>Granting authorities will require that applicants for support from the funds confirm within the application process that they are not an undertaking in difficulty and that they are not subject to a recovery order. Granting authorities may rely on accountants certificates, published financial statements and databases (including Arachne) to verify as appropriate.</p> <p>Checks will be carried out and documented by the awarding bodies at the project selection stage and again as part of the management verification process as appropriate. Applicants will be required to</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
						<p>Companies Registration Office (CRO) https://www.cro.ie/en-ie/</p> <p>Charities Regulator https://www.charitiesregulator.ie</p>	<p>complete self-declarations and to provide supporting documents as appropriate. Awarding bodies will be able to validate information against national databases (see above), accountant's certificates and/or audit reports.</p> <p>The Managing Authorities will review the checks carried out and documented at the level of the operation by the awarding bodies as part of the MA management verification process and using an approved sampling methodology.</p>
				2. Through access to expert advice and guidance on State aid matters, provided by State aid experts of local or national bodies.	Yes	<p>https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/EU-Internal-Market/EU-State-Aid-Rules/</p> <p>GBER schemes are published on the website of the Granting Authority (and the relevant information is made available to the Commission as part the information note required within 20 days of the granting of aid under the scheme).</p> <p>DETE is currently considering creating a centralised website for all GBER schemes.</p>	<p>The State Aid Unit in the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) provides guidance on interpretation of state aid rules and state aid training. EMFAF's parent department and several ERDF intermediary bodies have in-house expertise in relation to State Aid.</p> <p>DETE will provide advice, where relevant, on schemes at design stage and during the implementation phases of programmes. Advice is available to all public service bodies and the unit operate a case management system to ensure service delivery. If the issue is particularly complex or Managing Authority decide to seek another opinion they can deploy technical assistance to procure state aid advice including legal advice or specialist training. The State Aid Unit will provide tailored training to Managing Authorities and public bodies delivering schemes upon request subject to capacity. The</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							Interdepartmental Committee on State Aid is a state aid network, which includes Managing Authorities, shares information and knowledge.
3. Effective application and implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights			Yes	Effective mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ('the Charter') which include: 1. Arrangements to ensure compliance of the programmes supported by the Funds and their implementation with the relevant provisions of the Charter.	Yes	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/enacted/en/print IHREC Strategy Statement https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2019/02/Final-Strategy-Statement-ENG-VERSION.pdf Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2019/03/IHREC_Public_Sector_Duty_Final_Eng_WEB.pdf Guidance Tool on Equality and Human Rights in EU Funds https://eufunds.ie/regulations-guidance/	The MAs will ensure compliance with the Charter in all Funds. IHREC will support the MAs with monitoring, assisting to ensure compliance with the Charter. The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Duty) requires public bodies to have regard to non-discrimination, equality, and human rights in carrying out their functions. Adherence to the Duty by all implementing bodies will help to ensure compliance with the Charter. Building on the Duty, a guidance tool has been developed with IHREC to assist Intermediate Bodies (IBs) and Beneficiaries in advancing equality and human rights. IHREC will be invited to sit on the PMCs and will be consulted throughout the development of the PA and OPs and in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of OPs. Compliance will be ensured through application of the Duty and with the help of the Commission's 'Fundamental Rights Checklist' and IHREC guidance. Each IB or scheme delivery partner will report annually on progress in relation to human

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							rights and equality and on continued compliance with the Charter. Training on human rights and equality will be procured and provided to staff in the MAs, IBs and Beneficiaries as required.
				2. Reporting arrangements to the monitoring committee regarding cases of non-compliance of operations supported by the Funds with the Charter and complaints regarding the Charter submitted in accordance with the arrangements made pursuant to Article 69(7).	Yes	https://www.ihrec.ie/	Where a complaint regarding the Charter or potential case of non-compliance of operations supported by the Funds with the Charter is brought to the attention of the MA, the MA will establish the facts of the case. If the case is established by the MA to be a potential breach of the Charter, the MA will request that IHREC provide an assessment. The MA will state clearly the reasons for its belief that a potential breach of the Charter has occurred. Upon formal receipt of such a request, IHREC will complete their assessment with reference to Ireland's obligations under the Charter. Where IHREC deem that the Charter has not been complied with they will inform the Monitoring Committee. IHREC will set out its findings in a report and propose recommendations, if any, drawing on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and the guidance tool developed by IHREC and the MAs to support integration of equality and human rights standards under the Funds. The MA will respond and inform the Committee of any remedial actions taken and of the scope to draw lessons for the implementation of

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							programmes. Reporting on any cases of non-compliance and complaints will take place at least annually.
4. Implementation and application of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCPRD) in accordance with Council Decision 2010/48/EC			Yes	A national framework to ensure implementation of the UNCPRD is in place that includes: 1. Objectives with measurable goals, data collection and monitoring mechanisms.	Yes	<p>The National Disability Inclusion Strategy https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/WP17000244</p> <p>Mid-Term Review of National Disability Inclusion Strategy https://merrionstreet.ie/en/news-room/midterm_review_-_national_disability_inclusion_strategy.pdf</p> <p>Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-24</p> <p>IHREC - UNCPRD https://www.ihrec.ie/crpd/</p> <p>NDA – Monitoring of NDIS http://nda.ie/Publications/</p> <p>Launch of Disability Consultation Network</p>	<p>The current mechanism to implement the UNCPRD commitments is the National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) and its Steering Group.</p> <p>The NDIS has been extended until the end of 2022 with implementation of actions and monitoring by the NDIS Steering Group continuing. Progress is tracked against a set of 62 indicators identified by the National Disability Authority (NDA). There will be ongoing assessment of the implementation of actions identified in the NDIS until the strategy concludes. The Mid-Term review of the NDIS commits to the development of a specific UNCPRD implementation plan, expected in 2022.</p> <p>The Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (CESPD) is also of particular relevance in relation to Article 27 of the UNCPRD.</p> <p>IHREC is the independent monitoring mechanism for UNCPRD in Ireland, and will work with the NDA to carry out this task.</p> <p>A Disability Participation and Consultation Network has been established to ensure that persons with disabilities have input into the formation of policy and legislation in Ireland.</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				2. Arrangements to ensure that accessibility policy, legislation and standards are properly reflected in the preparation and implementation of the programmes.	Yes	<p>National Disability Inclusion Strategy</p> <p>Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-24</p> <p>Disability Act 2005</p> <p>Employment Equality Act 1998-2015</p> <p>Equal Status Act 2000-2018</p> <p>NDA Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information provided by Public Bodies</p> <p>NDA Centre for Excellence in Universal Design</p> <p>Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty</p>	<p>The MAs will ensure that accessibility policy, legislation and standards are properly reflected in the preparation and implementation of programmes. Where relevant, interventions will be aligned with and enable progress on the implementation of the NDIS & CESPDP.</p> <p>The NDA and IHREC are members of the Partnership Process Steering Group which advises on preparation for 2021-27 and will be consulted throughout the development of the PA and OPs. They will be invited to sit on the Monitoring Committees.</p> <p>The MAs will ensure that accessibility policy, legislation and standards will be reflected in all stages through consultation on key documents and active monitoring. Relevant policy, legislation and standards include the NDIS, CESPDP, the Disability Act and the Equality Acts. The NDA and IHREC have developed detailed guidance for use by public bodies involved in preparation and implementation of programmes. Each IB or scheme delivery partner will report annually on disability issues.</p> <p>Training in relation to disability issues will be procured and provided to staff in the MAs, IBs and Beneficiaries as required.</p>
				3. Reporting arrangements to the monitoring committee regarding cases of non-compliance of operations	Yes	https://www.ihrec.ie/	Where a complaint regarding UNCRPD or potential case of non-compliance of operations supported by the Funds with UNCRPD is brought to the attention of the

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				supported by the Funds with the UNCRPD and complaints regarding the UNCRPD submitted in accordance with the arrangements made pursuant to Article 69(7).			<p>MA, the MA will establish the facts of the case. If the case is established by the MA to be a potential breach of UNCRPD, the MA will request that IHREC provide their assessment. The MA will state clearly the reasons for its belief that a potential breach of UNCRPD has occurred.</p> <p>Upon formal receipt of this request, IHREC will complete their assessment with reference to Ireland's obligations under UNCRPD, the Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts. Where IHREC deem that UNCRPD has not been complied with, they will inform the Monitoring Committee. IHREC will set out its findings in a report and propose recommendations, if any, drawing on the Public Sector Duty and the guidance tool developed by IHREC and the MAs to support integration of equality and human rights under the Funds. The MA will respond and inform the Committee of any remedial actions taken and of the scope to draw lessons for the implementation of programmes. Reporting on any cases of non-compliance and complaints will take place at least annually.</p>
1.1. Good governance of national or regional smart specialisation strategy	ERDF	RSO1.1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities	Yes	Smart specialisation strategy or strategies shall be supported by: 1. Up-to-date analysis of challenges for innovation diffusion and digitalisation.	Yes	Chapter 4.4 of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation 2021-2027 reflect Ireland's policy and developments on innovation diffusion.	While various supports from State agencies, national RD&I institutes and academic-business collaborations assist innovation diffusion, barriers remain. These include lack of collaboration between domestic enterprises and MNCs in RD&I; low levels of investment in RD&I by domestic enterprises relative to MNCs;

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
		and the uptake of advanced technologies				<p>2018 report (p.49) - Assessing Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland's Workforce</p> <p>(p. 242) 2019 OECD Report on Ireland's SME and Entrepreneurship Policy</p> <p>Ireland's Industry 4.0 Strategy 2020-2025</p> <p>Enterprise 2025 Renewed</p> <p>Digitalisation of SMEs in Ireland</p> <p>Science Foundation Ireland Strategy 2025</p> <p>New Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024, supported by regional stakeholder committees.</p> <p>Interreg Europe COHES3ION</p>	<p>low levels of public RD&I expenditure; lack of awareness of RD&I fiscal supports; and complexity of the RD&I support environment.</p> <p>A 2018 EGFSN report on digital skills highlighted that certain regions, including the Midland region, were most at risk from automation.</p> <p>A 2019 OECD report on Ireland's SME and entrepreneurship policy highlighted a digital skills deficit linked to a knowledge and financing gap, referencing the DETE-commissioned report from the EIB on SME digitalisation.</p> <p>The work of the Southern Regional Assembly in defining and implementing a Smart Region approach (through the Interreg Europe COHES3ION project) will inform how our regions can analyse and overcome challenges to harness advancements in technological innovation and digitalisation to effectively deliver on regional and national priority goals.</p>
				2. Existence of competent regional or national institution or body, responsible for the management of the smart specialisation strategy.	Yes	Chapter 10 of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation 2021-2027 National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation	After governmental approval of S3, the current Steering Group, consisting of representatives from DETE, DPER and DFHERIS, as well as the three Regional Assemblies, will become the S3 national Implementation Group (IG) before mid-October 2022. It will oversee the delivery

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
						<p>2022-2027 contains details of bodies which will be responsible for the monitoring and management of S3.</p> <p>Research Priority Areas 2018-2023</p> <p>New Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024</p> <p>Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy</p>	<p>of S3 national and regional strategic priorities by bringing together relevant policy leads through the quadruple helix model, as well as related agencies and bodies directly involved in implementation as required.</p> <p>At NUTS3 level, the REPs committee structures will ensure regular EDP feedback to the IG by bringing evidence and insights from stakeholders from across the regions. At NUTS2 level, the Regional Assemblies will report ongoing S3 alignment with ERDF spending and broader results. Based on these updates, the IG will focus on prioritisation and action planning to respond to emerging regional consensus on cross-sectoral economic and innovation developments, ensuring continued alignment between national enterprise and innovation policies and S3. In turn, it will prepare an annual report outlining how S3 is progressing in both national and regional contexts.</p>
				3. Monitoring and evaluation tools to measure performance towards the objectives of the strategy.	Yes	<p>Chapter 10 of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation 2022-2027 contains details of bodies which will be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of S3.</p> <p>Relevant indicators will be sourced from the European Commission's</p>	<p>At NUTS3 level, S3 will be monitored through biannual progress reports from the 9 REPs, along with a synthesis provided by DETE's REPs unit. The mid-cycle review of the REPs will provide further monitoring feedback from quadruple helix agents, ensuring the translation of S3 into regional and local impacts. On completion of their current cycle, the REPs will be subject to an independent ex-post evaluation overseen by DETE.</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
						<p>European and Regional Innovation Scoreboards; CSO's BERD and Innovation Surveys, KTI's Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey.</p> <p>Research Priority Areas 2018-2023</p> <p>New Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024</p> <p>Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy</p>	<p>At NUTS2 level, the RAs will engage directly with the 9 REPs stakeholder groups to monitor overall progress on S3 implementation, providing further analysis on selected regional priority areas, along with reporting ongoing S3 alignment with ERDF. The mid-term review of ERDF allows for S3 goals to be judged against this major implementation mechanism. Indicators from the EC's RIS and KTI annual surveys, such as SMEs introducing product innovation, will be applied to assessments.</p> <p>At NUTS1 level, the IG will compile these monitoring results in its biannual report outlining how S3 is progressing in national and regional contexts. The IG will also utilise monitoring tools such as AIRO.</p>
				4. Functioning of stakeholder co-operation ("entrepreneurial discovery process").	Yes	<p>Chapters 2 to 8, inclusive, of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation 2022-2027 outline stakeholder co-operation and the entrepreneurial discovery process in S3.</p> <p>New Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024</p> <p>Regional Enterprise Plans (NUTS 3 level) supported by regional stakeholder committees and the Regional Enterprise Development Fund</p>	<p>The two-stage consultation EDP used for S3 was overseen by a national Steering Group of Government stakeholders. It provided governance of S3 during strategy creation, ensuring all criteria were met and identifying monitoring structures. Stakeholder consultation took place in the 9 REPs areas (NUTS 3 level) which saw engagement with innovation actors at regional level, gaining insights into their priorities and thus bridging any gap between national and regional policies.</p> <p>Re-employing this quadruple helix model, S3 will continue as a theme for the NUTS3 REPs steering committees which comprise local authorities, enterprise agencies, regional HEIs, skills fora and the private</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
						<p>Eastern and Midland Region RSES</p> <p>Northern and Western Region RSES</p> <p>Southern Region RSES</p>	<p>sector. The REPs mid-cycle reviews will be informed and updated by this bottom-up stakeholder-led process. A renewed cycle of REPs from 2024 will ensure continuous EDP until 2027.</p> <p>At NUTS2 level, S3 will be part of the statutory RSEs, chaired by the Regional Assemblies, which will engage directly with the 9 REPs steering committees to gain stakeholder participation in the identification of cross-regional priority areas, as well as providing their own analysis on regional insights.</p>
				5. Actions necessary to improve national or regional research and innovation systems, where relevant.	Yes	<p>Chapters 2 to 8, inclusive, of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation 2022-2027 outline actions necessary to enhance national and regional research and innovation systems.</p> <p>New Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024</p> <p>Regional Enterprise Plans (NUTS 3 level) supported by regional stakeholder committees and the Regional Enterprise Development Fund</p> <p>Eastern and Midland Region RSES</p>	<p>Current enterprise policy promotes collaboration, clustering and linkages between HEIs and enterprises. Initiatives e.g., DTIF, Knowledge Transfer Ireland, Innovation Partnerships etc. provide for partnerships between HEIs, research and enterprise, particularly SMEs, complementing other innovation initiatives from EI and SFI. DETE is working on a new national clustering approach as part of a new national enterprise policy White Paper by end 2022. Newly established Technological Universities will build on S3 regional sectoral specialisations which, in turn, will be supported by ERDF.</p> <p>Data shows the productivity gap between MNCs and SMEs has been increasing since 2000. Tackling this gap through S3's emphasis on innovation diffusion, as well as bottom-up quadruple helix stakeholder engagement, is key to addressing this.</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
						<p>Northern and Western Region RSES</p> <p>Southern Region RSES</p> <p>Regional Approach for Development of S3 (SRA & Bable, 2021)</p> <p>New National Innovation Strategy 2022-2030 (due in 2022)</p>	<p>Current enterprise agencies' (EI and IDA) strategies focus on growing broader-based innovation capacity in enterprise to drive higher productivity performance.</p> <p>Government investment in R&I now approaches €1 billion per annum and the national R&I strategy, Impact 2030, will target an overall research intensity rate of 2.5% of GNI*.</p>
				6. Where relevant, actions to support industrial transition.	Yes	<p>Chapters 4.2 and 4.3 of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation 2022-2027 reflect Ireland's policy and developments on managing industrial transition.</p> <p>Ireland's Industry 4.0 Strategy 2020-2025</p> <p>Climate Action Plan 2021</p> <p>Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025</p> <p>National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021</p> <p>Future Jobs Ireland 2019</p>	<p>Structural economic change is a persistent feature of Ireland's development over the past 30 years, more so than in most other OECD members. Ireland's ability to adapt to demographic, economic and technological trends has coincided with growing innovation activity, increased infrastructural support for RD&I and the expanding role of technology in its economy.</p> <p>Major elements of current industrial transition, namely digitalisation and the green transition, are supported by numerous policies and initiatives. These mechanisms include Future Manufacturing Ireland, clusters, EDIHs, remote working hubs, the AI strategy, Our Rural Future, the NRRP, the EU Just Transition Fund and the Climate Action Plan 2021. Along with improved co-ordination between these existing mechanisms and new supports financed by ERDF, S3 will guide</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
						<p>Draft territorial Just Transition plan for €84.5 million from the EU Just Transition Fund over the programme period of 2021-2027.</p> <p>New Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024</p>	strengthened financial support to enterprises to reduce their carbon emissions and develop skilled workers to work within green industries, as well as embracing and adjusting to digitalisation. Regional sectors particularly affected include manufacturing, agri-food, renewable energy, and the blue economy.
				7. Measures for enhancing cooperation with partners outside a given Member State in priority areas supported by the smart specialisation strategy.	Yes	<p>Chapters 4.5 and 4.6 of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Research and Innovation 2022-2027 reflect Ireland's policy and developments on international collaboration on RD&I and improving the national enterprise research and innovation system.</p> <p>Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy</p> <p>New Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024</p> <p>Research Priority Areas 2018-2023</p> <p>Ireland's European Research Area Roadmap</p>	<p>The IG's ToR will include the identification of collaborative RD&I opportunities with other regions in S3 priority areas by employing the forthcoming S3 Platform's R&I TEDv.</p> <p>Ireland's main mechanism for international engagement is Horizon with 14,000 collaborations with main partner Germany, alone. Ireland is committed to deepen this engagement by increasing research capacity through ERDF, informed and supported by S3, leveraging our NCPs, KTI, and our international networks.</p> <p>Impact 2030 has many actions to support international engagement, which will be informed by S3. Impact 2030 commits to a joined-up approach on horizon-scanning building on EI and IDA megatrends mapping, to inform Ireland's R&D investment priorities, including international engagement activities.</p> <p>The IG will engage with programme leads to assist with international engagement on ERDF schemes. Using existing international</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
						Knowledge Transfer Ireland's Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2021	links, IG members will share information on opportunities through EDIHs, IPCEIs, ERA, Interreg Europe, COHESION, EUREKA, ESA, EuroHPC, EuroCC, the European CCP and others. Other endeavours to support such international collaboration are contained in S3.
2.1. Strategic policy framework to support energy efficiency renovation of residential and non-residential buildings	ERDF	RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions	Yes	1. A national long term renovation strategy to support the renovation of the national stock of residential and non-residential buildings is adopted, in line with the requirements of Directive (EU) 2010/31/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council , which: (a) entails indicative milestones for 2030, 2040 and 2050; (b) provides an indicative outline of financial resources to support the implementation of the strategy; (c) defines effective mechanisms for promoting investments in building renovation.	Yes	Ireland's Long Term Renovation Strategy 2020 https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a4d69-long-term-renovation-strategy/ National Retrofit Plan (Chapter 14 of Climate Action Plan 2021) https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6223e-climate-action-plan-2021/	Ireland published its Long-Term Renovation Strategy (LTRS) and submitted it to the European Commission in 2020 as required under the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (2018/844/EU) (Recast). Ireland subsequently published the National Retrofit Plan – which builds on and augments the LTRS as part of the Climate Action Plan 2021. This plan (and future National Retrofit Plans) provide further detailed target setting. Ireland is now on a legally binding path to net-Zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of this decade under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. The Act provides the framework for Ireland to meet its international and EU climate commitments and to become a leader in addressing climate change.
				2. Energy efficiency improvement measures to achieve required energy savings	Yes	Climate Action Plan 2021 https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6223e-climate-action-plan-2021/	In November 2021, Ireland published its Climate Action Plan 2021. This plan sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050.

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
2.2. Governance of the energy sector	ERDF	RSO2.1. Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions	Yes	<p>The integrated national energy and climate plan is notified to the Commission, in accordance with Article 3 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 and consistent with the long-term greenhouse gas emission reduction objectives under the Paris Agreement, which includes:</p> <p>1. All elements required by the template set out in Annex I to Regulation (EU) 2018/1999.</p>	Yes	<p>Ireland's National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030</p> <p>https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0015c-irelands-national-energy-climate-plan-2021-2030/</p> <p>National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 https://assets.gov.ie/94442/f3e50986-9fde-4d34-aa35-319af3bfac0c.pdf</p> <p>Annex 1 Part 2 NECP Ireland https://assets.gov.ie/94444/1cfa6e5d-9e5e-4216-9a59-deca792ee3d8.pdf</p>	<p>Ireland's draft National Energy & Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030 was submitted to the European Commission in December 2018. The draft NECP took into account energy and climate policies developed up to that point, the levels of demographic and economic growth identified in the Project 2040 process and included all of the climate and energy measures set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027.</p> <p>The 2019 NECP was prepared to incorporate all planned policies and measures that were identified up to the end of 2019 and which collectively deliver a 30% reduction by 2030 in non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions (from 2005 levels).</p> <p>Under the Programme for Government, Ireland is committed to achieving a 7% annual average reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 2021 and 2030. The NECP was drafted before the Government committed to this higher level of ambition, and therefore does not reflect this higher commitment. Ireland is currently developing those policies and measures and intends to integrate the revision of the NECP into the process which will be required for increasing the overall EU contribution under the Paris Agreement.</p>
				<p>2. An outline of envisaged financial resources and mechanisms for measures</p>	Yes	<p>Ireland's National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030</p>	<p>Section 5.3 of Ireland's National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 gives an "Overview of Investment Needs"</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				promoting low-carbon energy.		<p>https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0015c-irelands-national-energy-climate-plan-2021-2030/</p> <p>The renewed National Development Plan 2021-2030 (October 2021)</p> <p>https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/7ac57-government-launches-the-renewed-national-development-plan-2021-2030/</p> <p>Climate Action Plan 2021 (November 2021)</p> <p>https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6223e-climate-action-plan-2021/</p>	<p>associated with delivering on goals set out in the NECP.</p> <p>The resources required to deliver on a higher level of ambition are set out in the renewed National Development Plan 2021-2030 and in the Climate Action Plan 2021.</p>

5. Programme authorities

Reference: point (k) of Article 22(3) and Articles 71 and 84 CPR

Table 13: Programme authorities

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	Position	Email
Managing authority	Southern Regional Assembly	David Kelly	Director	dkelly@southernassembly.ie
Audit authority	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	Dermot Byrne	Head of Audit (Internal & EU Audit Unit)	dermot.byrne@per.gov.ie
Body which receives payments from the Commission	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	Ruth McGrath	Structural Funds, Cohesion Policy	Ruth.McGrath@per.gov.ie
Body (other than managing authority) carrying out the accounting function	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	Joan O'Toole	ERDF Accounting Officer	joan.otoole@per.gov.ie

The repartition of the reimbursed amounts for technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR if more bodies are identified to receive payments from the Commission

Reference: Article 22(3) CPR

Table 13A: The portion of the percentages set out in point (b) of Article 36(5) CPR that would be reimbursed to the bodies which receive payments from the Commission in case of technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR (in percentage points)

6. Partnership

Reference: point (h) of Article 22(3) CPR

The Programme was prepared with input from a wide range of partners/stakeholders across both the of the programme's regions, in compliance with Article 22(3)(h) of the CPR. The selection of partners involved in programme preparation was based on the identification of appropriate partners/stakeholders from each of the relevant partners listed in Article 8(1).

Role of Relevant Partners in Programme Preparation

Relevant partners/stakeholders fully participated in programme preparation. A series of partnership structures, operating in accordance with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership and Art 8 of the CPR in relation to partnership and multi-level governance, were key to delivering the preparation stage. A series of specific preparation actions took place from 2020-22 in overlapping steps.

National Partnership Structures

Coordination between the Funds ensures strong synergies between co-financed interventions, resulting in reduced administrative cost and burden. Ireland created structures to ensure coordination between the Funds and other EU and national instruments, involving key bodies at EU, national, regional and local levels. These structures will remain in place for implementation.

- **Partnership Process Steering Group of the Funds (PPSG):** a national PPSG was established to assist programme authorities in developing the Partnership Agreement, including identifying and putting in place mechanisms to address synergies, complementarities and enhance cooperation across programmes. The PPSG includes representatives from Member State, the funds and responsible government department, economic and social partners, bodies promoting social inclusion; fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination, and relevant bodies representing civil society, the Common Agricultural Policy, the Recovery & Resilience Plan, and the Brexit Adjustment Reserve.
- **Partnership Agreement Working Group (PAWG):** reporting to the PPSG, the PAWG comprised fund programme authorities to assist with drafting and coordinating timelines for the purposes of the Partnership Agreement. It was instrumental in developing a common approach to the horizontal principles by identifying possible synergies/complementarities across the funds and other EU instruments. This group met regularly during the preparation phase, and it is proposed that it could continue to examine challenges of managing bodies in developing complementarities between actions and facilitate peer to peer learning between funds.

Programme Preparation Activities

The Managing Authority engaged with relevant partners during the programme preparation stage in a transparent and effective way. Consultation of partners followed several steps and processes from 2020-22, involving a needs analysis, review of public policy, meetings, workshops, questionnaires, public consultations and updates on progress. Documentation was circulated to members of the PPSG and the PAWG, notices of public consultation and consultation reports were published on the website www.eufunds.ie with links from the websites of the Managing Authorities as part of the public consultation below. The output of these actions served as inputs, informing the shape of the programme.

Partnership Agreement Needs Analysis, 2020

An independent needs analysis was completed in June 2020 for ERDF and ESF+ to assess the needs which could be addressed by Cohesion Funding through these funds. The report helped underpin planning for Ireland's Partnership Agreement 2021-27 and provide strategic choices for the use of ERDF and ESF+. It comprised a review of the EU and national policy context and a detailed examination of the baseline situation, including evidence on research and innovation, competitiveness and growth, digitalisation, green economy, employment, education & skills, and childcare. It also identified social groups most affected by poverty or at risk of social exclusion. It assessed Ireland's regional situation, including the three RSES and took account of Brexit and COVID-19. 49 organisations from the partners/ stakeholder categories were consulted as part of the process resulting in 36 formal written responses which resulted in identifying ten priority areas for the funds.

Public Consultation, June 2020 – September 2020

The Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform, and of Education & Skills and the Regional Assemblies commissioned an independent public consultation process in 2020 to prepare for the Partnership Agreement and Programmes. A key objective was to ensure public/stakeholders had an opportunity to shape cohesion policy in Ireland and to enhance the visibility of the funds and their support to Irish life. The consultation was built around three actions:

- **Needs Analysis Report:** detailed assessment of the policy landscape and the funding investment priorities 2021-27, based on needs and cohesion goals in a socio-economic context,
- **National and Regional Workshop Event:** online public consultation workshop on 28th July 2020 with over 100 attendees - presenting the funds, three regional interactive discussion groups, and a live poll on the priorities against the Needs Analysis,
- **Public Consultation Survey:** 13th July-4th Sept 2020 with a detailed survey and submission framework. 109 submissions were received from all sectors and analysed against several areas of enquiry, including a specific focus on regional needs.

Relevant Stakeholder Scoping, 2020-2022

This involved engagement with relevant public bodies, such as government departments and state agencies, to identify initial policy and action alignment with the ERDF programmes for 2021-27. This process involved meetings with each public body and a questionnaire to determine possible synergies and opportunities for ERDF to enhance current national activities. It also involved presentations and discussions with members of the national steering group for Local Authority Decarbonisation Zones (DZs) on a selection of proposed actions. This group had representation from the CCMA, the Climate Action Regional Offices, the SEAI, the Office of the Planning Regulator, the Regional Assemblies and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Assembly Meetings 2020 - 2022

The Regional Programme 2021-2027 was a recurring agenda item at Assembly Meetings. This ensured that the locally elected representatives that comprise the two Regional Assemblies could receive updates on programme development and provide input on the preparation of the programme.

Complementarities Workshop & Report, April, November and December 2021

A series of complementarities workshop took place where the CPR funds and other EU programmes discussed the main themes of their programmes to identify possible complementarities. The funds discussed how they could work together to achieve common goals and mitigate against double funding. A report was drafted with an outline of the issues raised and next steps.

Horizontal Enabling Conditions Engagement, 2021

The Funds worked closely with IHREC on the development of new guidance tool to strengthen the institutional capacity of Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries in advancing equality and human rights during programme implementation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Public Consultation, 2022

In 2022, the MA commissioned an SEA of the Programme to evaluate the environment consequences of proposed plans/schemes, to ensure environmental issues are fully integrated and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision making. Conducted in line with national and EU guidelines and legislation, the process includes two stage of consultation with the public and relevant statutory bodies.

Role of Relevant Partners in Programme Implementation, Monitoring, Reporting & Evaluation

Partnership is a key element at all stages of programme implementation, including monitoring, reporting, communication and evaluation. Many of the relevant partners/stakeholders who were involved at the preparation stage will be actively engaged with the MA in the implementation stage. Some relevant public bodies, such as Government Departments and state agencies, will be directly involved in programme delivery and other partners/stakeholders will be intervention beneficiaries, as appropriate. A performance framework has been established, as per Article 17 of the CPR, to allow for transparent monitoring, reporting & evaluating

of programme performance to ensure successful delivery of targets. The relevant partners/stakeholders will be consulted, as appropriate, in relation to the delivery of the performance framework. Technical assistance will be used to support the strengthening of the institutional capacity of partners, including, for example, training and development activities.

Programme Monitoring Committee (MC)

The partnership principle and the European Code of Conduct on Partnership will be reflected in both the MC's membership and adopted rules of procedure. Gender balance will be promoted on the MC. Membership, which will be published on the programme website, will include representatives from:

- Member State (DPER),
- Regional, local, national, and other relevant public authorities, including those responsible for implementation and Government Departments representing the horizontal principles,
- Elected Representatives at regional level,
- Representatives from other EU shared management funds in Ireland,
- Economic and social partners,
- Bodies representing civil society - environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination,
- Research organisations and academic institutions,
- European Commission (in an advisory capacity).

A shadow Monitoring Committee was established in April 2022 and reflects the above membership requirements.

The MC will meet at least once yearly to examine and make recommendations on all issues affecting programme implementation, progress in achieving milestones and targets and measures taken to address issues, including relevant programme contributions to Ireland's country-specific recommendations, elements of the ex-ante assessments, evaluations and follow up to associated findings, progress on implementation of communications and visibility actions and implementing operations of strategic importance, actions to ensure fulfilment of enabling conditions, progress in administrative capacity-building for public bodies, partners, and beneficiaries, as relevant.

The MA will submit a programme evaluation plan to the MC within a year of approval. Similarly, a mechanism for reporting to the MC cases of non-compliance of supported operations with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU will be put in place to ensure enabling conditions remain considered and respected during implementation.

Partnership Agreement Monitoring Committee (PAMC)

The PAMC will oversee the implementation of the Partnership Agreement, with membership aligned to Article 8 of the CPR. It will assist the fund and programme authorities and put in place, where necessary, appropriate systems to address cooperation, complementarity, subsidiarity and implementation issues between the funds and programmes and other EU instruments.

7. Communication and Visibility

Reference: point (j) of Article 22(3) CPR

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union guarantees the right of citizens to be informed about European issues. To respect the integrity of this right, the MA will communicate the opportunities, achievements, and impact of the Programme in a visible, open, and transparent way to stakeholders, particularly the public. The MA will involve delivery partners in ensuring the results of operations are visible to those living in the programme area and beyond.

Key Objectives

- Raise potential beneficiaries' awareness of the funding opportunities,
- Support beneficiaries with communications compliance while communicating co-funded activity,
- Amplify awareness & understanding of the objectives/ achievements of operations, in particular Operations of Strategic Importance,
- Highlight the positive contribution of the ERDF and EU funding to the lives of people in the programme area by increasing the visibility of results of the operations.

Target Audience

Communications & visibility actions will reach a wide audience, targeting the different audiences below with key messages that are relevant & tailored to them and their needs:

- General public
- Potential beneficiaries & beneficiaries
- Monitoring Committee
- Local, regional, national & EU bodies and elected representatives
- European Commission, incl. the Commission & European Parliament offices in Ireland
- Europe Direct Information Centres
- HEIs, education/training bodies
- Business & social partners, incl. SMEs
- Bodies representing civil society
- Local, regional, national & European media

Communications Channels

Website: regular updates on programme objectives, opportunities & activity, incl. list of operations and calls for proposals.

Social Media: Build on existing profiles (Twitter/ Facebook/ Instagram/ LinkedIn/ YouTube) to target different audience groups and explore other appropriate digital tools as they arise.

Media Engagement: (online/ print/ other) press releases, advertorials, and interviews.

Events & Campaigns: organised by MA and/or third parties (in-person/ hybrid/ online) to inform, engage and train our target audiences.

Publications: (online/ print) to support programme communication/visibility actions, incl. audio-visual material.

Networks: work with delivery partners, national communications coordinator, ESIF in Ireland, stakeholders & the INFORMEU network to develop & deliver innovative actions

National Web Portal: provide content and regular updates to the national portal on programme progress.

The MA will consider accessibility of its communications tools and platforms for persons with disabilities and will comply with S.I. No. 358/2020 - European Union (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations 2020.

Beneficiary Supports

- Set up ongoing communications compliance supports for beneficiaries, including operations of strategic importance,
- Define a publicity process between the MA, Member State and the Commission for the launch and ongoing progress of Operations of Strategic Importance to increase their visibility to target audiences.

Budget & Resources

The MA will have a communications budget of up to 0.3% with built-in flexibility to allow for actions to move with trends, circumstances, and tools. The MA will appoint a Communications Officer to coordinate the delivery of all related measures and to collaborate with the national communication co-ordinator.

Annual Communications Plan

The MA will implement a yearly plan to achieve the strategy's objectives, including measurable actions:

- Online actions via the programme website and social media channels,
- Ongoing communications compliance supports for beneficiaries, including operations of strategic importance,
- Define a process for collaboration between the MA, Member State and the Commission to publicise the launch and ongoing progress of Operations of Strategic Importance to increase their visibility to target audiences,
- Public information events, media campaigns and activities,
- Publication of advertising, advertorials, and case studies of operation activity (online/ print),
- Update the monitoring committee and the Commission on communications actions.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Communication & visibility actions will be subject to regular evaluation, with data from surveys, internal statistics, listener & reader reach, website/platform analytics etc. The impact of outputs will be measured by two surveys to evaluate the overall impact of communications activities by measuring public awareness of and attitudes toward the EU and EU funding (baseline: 2021 public awareness survey: 42% prompted awareness of ERDF).

The following actions will be subject to yearly monitoring & evaluation against metrics and tools that are appropriate to that action or platform:

Communications Strategy: baseline 2021 public awareness survey: 42% prompted awareness.

Website & social media: metrics measured against 2021 analytics as baseline.

Events: 10 presentations delivered at MA and/ or third party events on SEM programme activity.

Advertorials: 9 published (online/ print reach).

Case Studies: 12 collected and published online.

Publications: 7 produced & published online (programme statistics).

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 CPR

Table 14: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Intended use of Articles 94 and 95 CPR	Yes	No
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under the priority according to Article 94 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 1: Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the SCO
					Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex I to the CPR and the Annex IV to the EMFAF regulation

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable

Appendix 1: Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates

B. Details by type of operation

C. Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates

1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data, where the data is stored, cut-off dates, validation, etc.)

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 94(2) CPR is relevant to the type of operation.

3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and, if requested, provided in a format that is usable by the Commission.

4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate.

5. Assessment of the audit authority(ies) of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data.

Appendix 2: Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	The amount covered by the financing not linked to cost	Type(s) of operation covered		Conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Indicator		Unit of measurement for the conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Envisaged type of reimbursement method used to reimburse the beneficiary(ies)
					Code (1)	Description		Code (2)	Description		

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex I to the CPR and the Annex IV to the EMFAF regulation

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable

B. Details by type of operation

Appendix 3: List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable

Article 22(3) CPR

The programme will support the establishment of two new Regional Smart Hubs for Entrepreneurial Research and Innovation in the programme area.

Each of these Smart Hubs is expected to be an operation of strategic importance in the programme area. The operations will be selected through a competitive call. An indicative timetable is given below.

Q4 2022 Call Launch

Q4 2023 Selection of operations

Q4 2023 Commencement of operations

Q1 2024 Official Launch

The new regional Smart Hubs for Entrepreneurial Research and Innovation will be established in key thematic areas aligned with the Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy and regional strategic priorities. They will establish a new model for regional innovation and entrepreneurial training. The model will integrate critical elements of a research and innovation (R&I) ecosystem with entrepreneurial approaches, thus accelerating time to market from research concept to HPSUs, new product introduction, licences and innovations.

DOCUMENTS

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
Programme snapshot 2021IE16RFPR002 1.1	Snapshot of data before send	31-Oct-2022		Ares(2022)7548726	Programme_snapshot_2021IE16RFPR002_1_1_en.pdf	31-Oct-2022	Hogan, Enda