

Horizontal Priorities: Environment and Fight Against Climate Change

In this briefing sheet, we focus on the *environment and fight against climate change*, as one of four horizontal priorities for the Erasmus+ programme, and consider how this should be addressed when assessing a funding application or final report for a Small-Scale Partnership (KA210) or Cooperation Partnership (KA220). This briefing sheet was developed in collaboration with [SALTO Green Transition and Sustainable Development](#) and builds on information and guidance provided in the *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*, *Guide for Experts on Quality Assessment*, *Handbook on the Lump Sum Funding Model* and [Green Transition and Sustainable Development Strategy](#).

Setting the Scene

The [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](#) confirms environment and climate action as key priorities for the EU, highlighting the strategic value of the European Green Deal and the important role for education and training organisations to engage with pupils, parents and the wider community on the changes needed for a successful transition to climate neutrality by 2050. It also confirms that Erasmus+ is a key instrument for building knowledge, skills, and attitudes on climate change and supporting sustainable development within the European Union and beyond.

The [Council Recommendation on Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development \(2022\)](#), emphasises the need to provide learners of all ages with opportunities to find out about the climate crisis and sustainability, developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes of learners to live more sustainably, promote sustainable consumption, adopt healthier and more environmentally-conscious lifestyles and contribute individually and collectively to the transformation of our societies. It goes on to underline how sustainability should become a part of the entire spectrum of education and training, including curricula and professional development for educators, as well as buildings, infrastructure and operations.

The [European Sustainability Competence Framework or GreenComp \(2022\)](#), provides a common reference framework on sustainability competences, relevant to all forms of education and training and to all learner audiences - irrespective of age, level of education and learning setting - and providing clear guidance to educators on the targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes. GreenComp details 12 distinct competences across four interrelated areas, namely: embodying sustainability values; embracing complexity in sustainability; envisioning sustainable futures; and acting for sustainability.

A dedicated [Green Transition and Sustainable Development Strategy \(2024\)](#) highlights the importance of Erasmus+ for engaging a wide spectrum of stakeholders, playing an active role in fostering new skills, and promoting individual and collective action in support of sustainability. The strategy considers how Erasmus+ projects can prepare and engage individuals and organisations to actively contribute to the green transition. It goes on to describe how environmental sustainability is important at every step of the project lifecycle and to detail steps that beneficiaries might take before, during and after project delivery, including efforts to integrate a green dimension into all planned actions and activities.

[SALTO Green Transition and Sustainable Development](#) is working to define specific categories of activity that Erasmus+ beneficiaries might consider when planning partnership and mobility actions, including those centred on developing specific competence or skill sets and those centred on project design, management and dissemination, which they promote through webinars and other publicity actions.

Application Stage

SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS aim to widen access to the programme for small-scale actors and less experienced organisations. When assessing applications under this action, it is important to respect the principle of proportionality, ensuring that the proposed actions are consistent with the targeted aims, while recognising that these are smaller projects with limited funding and often more modest ambitions.

COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS are larger projects with higher levels of funding, targeting transformation and change at individual, organisational and/or sectoral levels, including improved quality of work and practices, and strengthened capacity to work transnationally and across sectors.

Both partnership types require applicants to address at least one horizontal and/or relevant sectoral priority and, for the former, this includes the priority for *environment and fight against climate change*. Additionally, for both partnership types, applicants are encouraged to take into account all horizontal aspects of the programme (inclusion and diversity; environmental sustainability; digital dimension; participation and civic engagement) when preparing their application for funding.

In terms of how projects might implement the priority for green transition, the following options exist:

- projects which select the priority for the environment and fight against climate change and which directly address this topic;
- projects where green transition and environmental sustainability measures helps in achieving other horizontal or wider programme priorities;
- projects which embed green transition and environmental sustainability measures into plans for delivering their activities.

The insights presented below, for the four core assessment criteria, should help in your assessment the *environment and fight against climate change* dimension at the point of application.

Under **RELEVANCE**, you should consider:

- how effectively the project addresses *environment and fight against climate change*, where selected as a priority.
- how convincingly the selected priority aligns with wider project objectives, target groups, their needs and plans for their engagement, and ambitions for innovation.
- whether the proposal includes credible and well-planned activities that can effectively address the selected priority (for example, raising awareness on climate change and sustainability; equipping participants with the knowledge and skills they need to make sustainable choices; building capacity in the participating organisations through an exchange of good practices and experience).
- the extent to which transnational cooperation offers added value in the targeted activities, including through collaboration, co-creation and an exchange of practices.

Under **QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN**, you should consider:

- how clearly the proposal integrates the green transition into its methodology and expected results.
- whether efforts to build knowledge-skills-capacity-awareness in support of green transition are clear, credible and achievable [this should be seen as especially positive], being designed to meet the needs of key target audiences and having clear plans for their engagement.
- what steps are planned before-during-after project delivery that will allow for minimal or zero impact on the environment (for example: green travel commitment; waste reduction efforts; hybrid event delivery; carbon offsetting), reflecting on the credibility and achievability of the targeted actions and ensuring that clear targets and indicators are presented.
- whether actions centred on the development and testing of tools-platforms-frameworks-resources to support green transition are clear, credible and achievable, being designed to meet the needs of key target audiences, and having clear plans for their engagement.

Under **QUALITY OF THE PARTNERSHIP**, you should consider:

- whether the required capacity and expertise exists to support green transition and related development and/or capacity-building actions.
- whether partner networks and outreach capacity is sufficient to reach the targeted individuals, networks and communities, including those being targeted for capacity-building on green transition.

Under **IMPACT**, you should consider:

- the adequacy and sufficiency of the targeted actions, both during and beyond the project lifetime, going beyond one-off opportunities for engagement with topics related to the environment and fight against climate change and enhancing knowledge-skills-attitudes among the participating individuals-organisations-systems-communities.
- how changed attitudes, practices and capacities relevant to the environment and fight against climate change are to be specifically measured and reported.

Final Reports for Small-Scale Partnerships

At the final report stage, Small-Scale Partnerships are judged against the same criteria used at the point of application (relevance, project design, partnership, impact) yet with a focus on results.

The insights presented below, for the four core assessment criteria, should help in your assessment of the green transition and environmental sustainability at the final report stage.

Under **RELEVANCE**, you should consider:

- the extent to which the project effectively addressed *environment and fight against climate change*, where selected as a priority.
- the extent to which transnational cooperation added value to project delivery, including through collaboration, co-creation and an exchange of practices related to the green transition.

Under **QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN**, you should consider:

- the extent to which planned methods-actions-results centred on *environment and fight against climate change* were actually delivered.
- the extent to which plans to build knowledge-skills-capacity-awareness in support of green transition were effectively achieved, meeting the needs of key target audiences and with evidence of active engagement.
- the extent to which predefined actions and indicators centred on allowing minimal or zero impact on the environment (for example: green travel commitment; waste reduction efforts; hybrid event delivery; carbon offsetting), were effectively delivered and achieved.
- the extent to which plans to develop and test tools-platforms-frameworks-resources were effectively delivered, meeting the needs of key target audiences, and with evidence of active engagement.

Under **QUALITY OF THE PARTNERSHIP**, you should consider:

- the extent to which partner staff and networks were engaged as a means of reaching and effectively engaging the targeted individuals and communities, supporting green transition through the targeted development and/or capacity-building actions.

Under **IMPACT**, you should consider:

- the extent to which the targeted actions were sufficient, going beyond one-off opportunities for engagement with topics related to the environment and fight against climate change and enhancing knowledge-skills-attitudes among the participating individuals-organisations-systems-communities
- the extent to which changed attitudes, practices and capacities relevant to the environment and fight against climate change were effectively measured and reported.

Additional insights into scoring bands and thresholds for SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS can be found in the [Expert Briefing Sheet for KA210 Final Reports](#).

Final Reports for Cooperation Partnerships

At the final report stage, Cooperation Partnerships focus solely on Work Packages defined at the point of application, and on the quality and extent of achievement of all planned tasks and deliverables.

As a guiding principle, your assessment should focus on *the extent to which the project was implemented in line with the approved grant application*, as per Annex 2 of the beneficiary agreement, including reflections on horizontal priorities as a part of the overall assessment.

Efforts to address the *environment and fight against climate change* in any aspect of project delivery, should be predominantly addressed under **WORK PACKAGE 1**, reflecting holistically on eventual project implementation and comparing this to the original project proposal. Where a beneficiary has selected the *environment and fight against climate change* as a named priority at the point of application, it is especially important to reflect on the extent to which project delivery actively contributed to this priority, according to insights presented in the final report.

You might also reference this in [OTHER WORK PACKAGES](#), where relevant actions were integrated into the original project design. In such cases, it is important to focus on the nature, extent and quality of task and output delivery, highlighting significant changes as well as positive aspects of project, task and output delivery that merit recognition.

Additional insights into scoring bands and thresholds for COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS can be found in the [Expert Briefing Sheet for KA220 Final Reports](#).