

Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF)

Guidelines for Applicants

19.12.2016

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1 Introduction and aim of the document

This document provides potential applicants guidance on how to complete the application documents and gives an overview of the general implementation process and the eligibility criteria of the Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF). It also offers an outline of the implementation procedure of selected DSPF projects and summarises the main responsibilities of DSPF Lead and Project Partners.

General information to the DSPF can be found on the PA 10 webpage:

www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/danube-strategic-project-fund

2 Key data to the DSPF call for proposals

Total volume of DSPF funding	€ 969.000,00
Possible DSPF funding per project	€ 70.000,00 – € 100.000,00
Planned number of supported projects	10-12
Possible project duration	12 months
Planned start of project implementation	1 st of October 2017
Planned project completion	30 st of September 2018
Deadline for submission of Application Documents to PACs	February 15th 2017 – 12:00 CET

3 Bodies involved in the governance and implementation of the DSPF

EUSDR Priority Area Coordinator 10, City of Vienna, Austria (PAC10): DI Rudolf Schicker

PAC10 is responsible for stepping up institutional capacity and cooperation in the Danube Region and the implementation of the DSPF as **Managing Authority** in close cooperation with the European Commission (EC) DG Regio. PAC10 is also member of the DSPF Advisory Board (see below).

EuroVienna

EuroVienna is affiliated entity to PAC10, the City of Vienna and **Implementing Body** (IB) in regard to the Danube Strategic Project Fund (DSPF). The IB provides support and technical assistance to PAC10, the Advisory Board, the DSPF Jury and the Lead Partners of the DSPF projects. In addition, the IB conducts a formal check of received applications (on technical eligibility criteria) and acts as contracting body to the Lead Partners of the selected DSPF projects. EuroVienna monitors the progress of individual projects and of the DSPF implementation.

Advisory Board (AB)

The AB is composed of experts strongly involved in the macro region EUSDR and/or in the process of enlargement and neighbourhood policies. Its members are nominated by PAC10 and the European Commission.

The AB has the following main responsibilities:

- ✓ Making recommendations for selection criteria for DSPF projects to be considered by the Jury
- ✓ Making recommendations for setting up the DSPF selection Jury
- ✓ Making recommendations of forwarding a limited number of DSPF project applications to the Jury (pre-assessment)

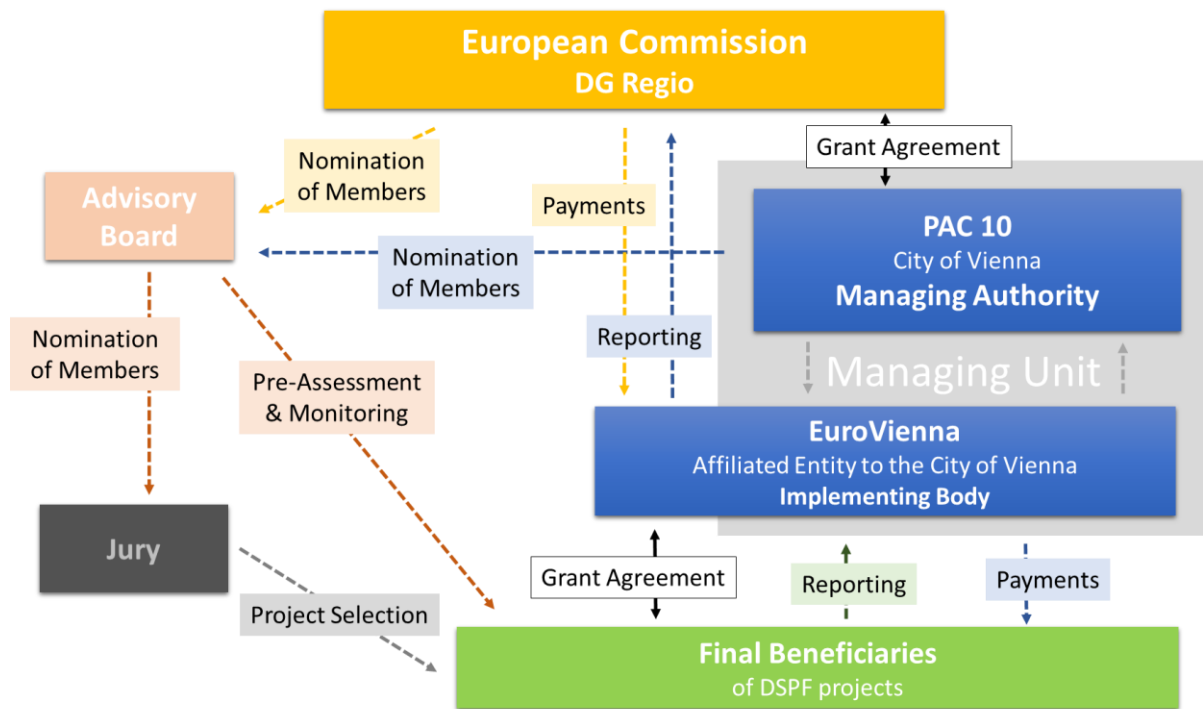
EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) and their Steering Groups (SGs)

PACs and their SGs are experts for the matters addressed by potential project applicants of the DSPF and therefore play a central role in the DSPF Application Process. PACs together with their Steering Groups can invite eligible organisations that are working on the preparation or implementation of strategic projects to submit an application for DSPF funding.

DSPF Jury

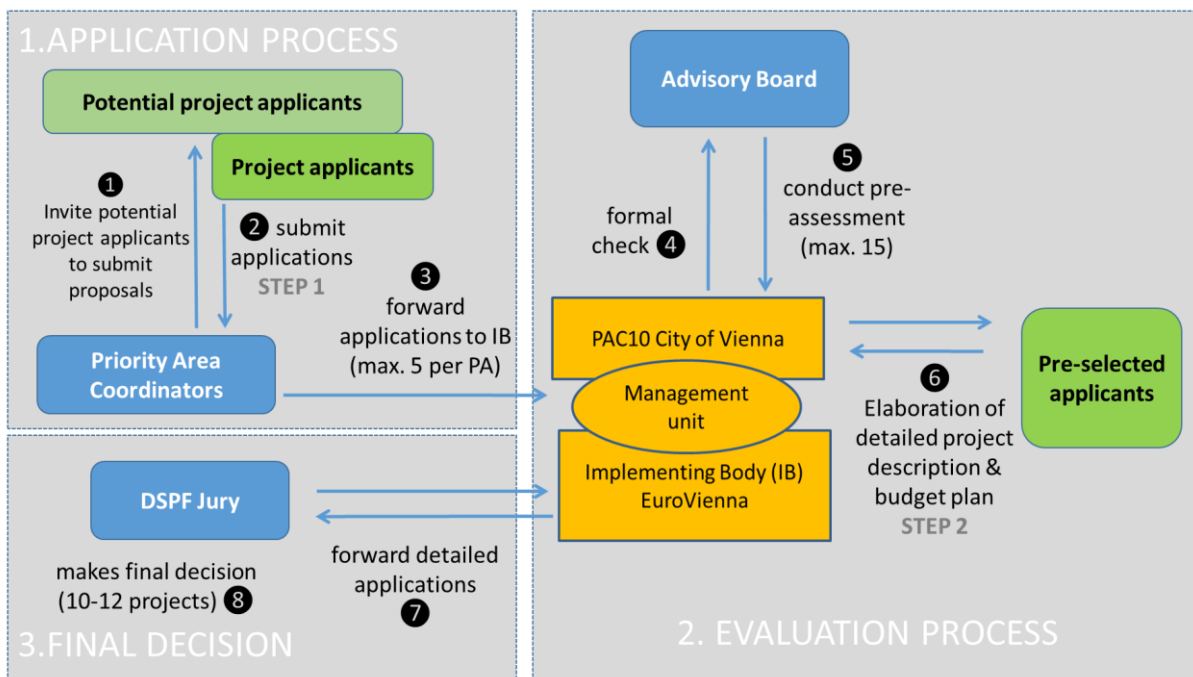
The members of the DSPF Jury are composed of experts nominated by EC-DG Regio, PAC 10 Vienna and the Advisory Board. The jury makes the final decision on the DSPF projects that will receive funding through the initiative.

Governance Structure



4 Implementation Process of the DSPF initiative

4.1 Overview



4.2 Application Process

The application procedure for the DSPF is organised as a semi-closed call. Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) of the EUSDR and their Steering Groups (SGs) are experts on the needs in the Danube Region and can therefore invite organisations / clusters that are active in the Danube Region and qualify as potential DSPF applicants to submit an application for DSPF funding. **Applications sent to the IB directly will not be considered.**

The application pack is available for potential applicants through the Priority Area Coordinators from the end of December 2016 until mid-February 2017 (more details see also section 6 “DSPF Project Application”).

Each PA can forward up to 5 DSPF applications to the IB for further assessment. By forwarding a DSPF project application, the Priority Area Coordinators give their full support to the project. No additional Letter of Support is needed.

4.3 Evaluation Process & Decision

Formal check

After all applications have been forwarded to the IB by the PACs, a formal check is conducted on the following criteria:

- ✓ Is the application formally correct and signed?
- ✓ Are technical eligibility criteria fulfilled?

All formally correct applications will be forwarded to the Advisory Board for pre-assessment.

Based on the assessments conducted by the Advisory Board Members a ranking list of all project proposals is established. The 15 best projects of this list are considered to be of highest priority to the EUSDR and to best fulfil the criteria of the DSPF. These 15 projects will advance to the 2nd step of the application / evaluation procedure and form the basis for the final decision by the DSPF Jury.

Elaboration of detailed project concept and budget plan with IB

The IB will get in contact with the Lead Partners of the 15 projects to induce and support the elaboration of a **detailed project description** (including activities, indicators and outputs) and a **detailed project budget plan**.

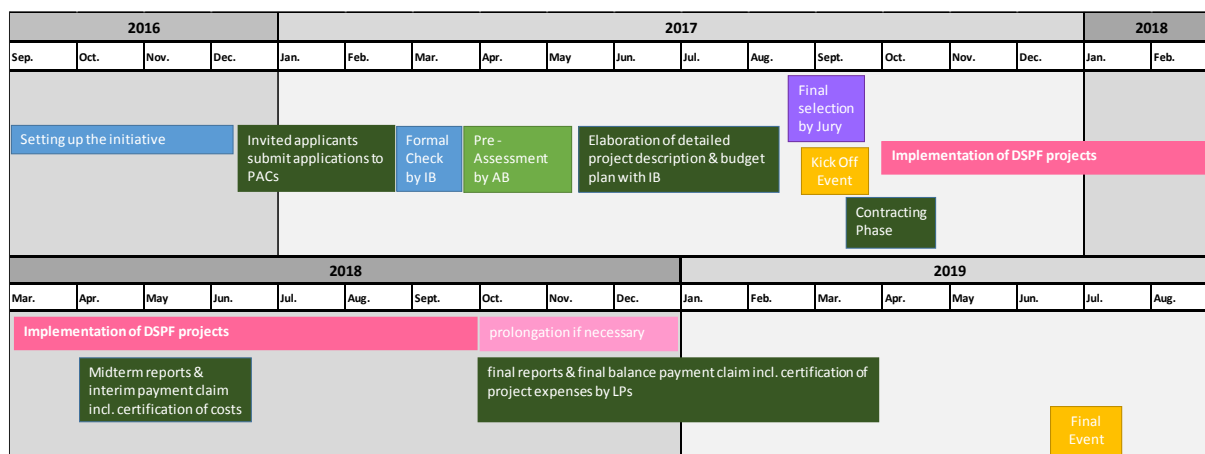
For projects that are selected for DSPF funding, a lump sum of **€ 1.200,00** is foreseen to cover some preparation and travel costs incurred in relation to the establishment of the detailed project description and the detailed project budget plan.

In case of severe doubts that a given project will be implemented successfully and that the awarded funds will be used responsibly, the application will not be subject to the final selection and no preparation lump sum will be paid.

Selection

The maximum 15 best project applications will be forwarded to the DSPF Jury for selection. All Members of the Jury conduct their project assessment individually. The final decision on the selected DSPF projects is taken from the summary of all individually assessed project. The selected projects are presented in the DSPF Kick Off Meeting.

4.4 Timeline



5 Eligibility Criteria

General eligibility criteria

- ✓ The project responds to the actual needs in the Danube Region and is of high value for the EUSDR
- ✓ The project has not received funding so far, double funding is excluded
- ✓ The project does not fit into any other national and/or EU programme
- ✓ The project is sustainable and has a clear follow-up strategy (future investment and/or policy perspective)

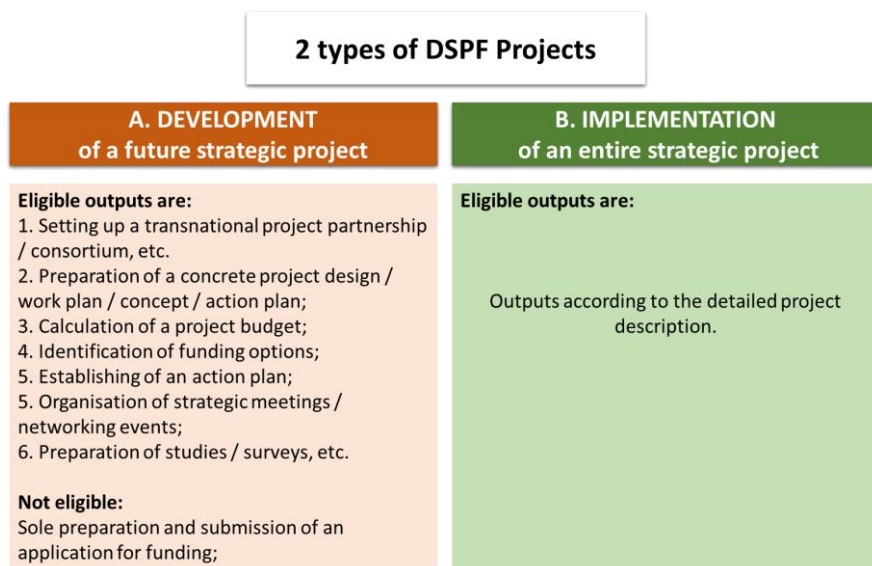
5.1 Technical Eligibility Criteria

Eligible types of projects

The DSPF is designed to support 2 different types of projects:

- A. The development of a future strategic project, which will be launched as a result of the DSPF project**
- B. The implementation of an entire strategic project**

The elaboration of the sole preparation of a project application for a funding initiative / programme is **not eligible** within the DSPF.



Eligible project duration

The duration for all DSPF projects is planned to be **12 months**.

Eligible project budget

- ✓ The DSPF amount for each project is **min. € 70.000,00** and max. **€ 100.000,00**
- ✓ The DSPF co-financing rate is max. **90 %** and shall not be lower than 50%

The partner's contribution must be provided by the Lead and/or Project Partners and cannot come from any other EU funding source.

Eligible Lead & Project Partners

Each DSPF project must be implemented by a project partnership consisting of:

- ✓ the **Lead Partner**, that is responsible for the entire implementation of the project and one or more work-packages
- ✓ **min. 1 or max. 3 Project Partners**, that are responsible for the implementation of one or more work packages (active role must be guaranteed)
- ✓ **Max. 3 Strategic Partners** that do support the project, however have no active role in the implementation and do not co-finance the project (Strategic Partners are not compulsory)

The Lead or Project Partners must be:

- ✓ Bodies established under public or private law, having legal personality
- ✓ Belong to one of these categories:
 - National, regional and local authorities;
 - SMEs or start-ups;
 - Academies and Universities (in particular applied research and development units);
 - Associations and social partners;

Not eligible Lead Partners, Project Partners and Strategic Partners

- ✓ PACs (and their organisational unit / department)
- ✓ Organisations that are represented in the DSPF Advisory Board
- ✓ Organisations that are represented in the DSPF selection Jury
- ✓ EuroVienna as Implementing Body

Eligible Countries & geographic area of project implementation

The **Lead Partner** must have its seat or legal competence in the **Danube Region**, Project or Strategic Partners can also come from the **Adriatic and Ionian Region** (Greece, Italy or Albania in addition to EUSDR). The partnership must consist of organisations from at least **2 different countries**.

Eligible Countries	
Lead Partners	Project - & Strategic Partners
<p>From the EUSDR: <u>EU Countries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austria • Bulgaria • Croatia • Czech Republic • Germany • Hungary • Romania • Slovakia • Slovenia <p>Accession Countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bosnia and Herzegovina • Montenegro • Serbia <p>Neighbourhood Countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moldova • Ukraine 	<p>From the EUSDR: <u>EU Countries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austria • Bulgaria • Croatia • Czech Republic • Germany • Hungary • Romania • Slovakia • Slovenia <p>Accession Countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bosnia and Herzegovina • Montenegro • Serbia <p>From the EUSAIR: <u>EU Countries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croatia • Greece • Italy • Slovenia <p>Accession Countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albania • Bosnia and Herzegovina • Montenegro • Serbia <p>Special attention is paid to projects that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Countries being part of the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the Danube Region → Accession and Neighbouring Countries

Activities of the DSPF projects must be implemented in the **Danube Region** or **Adriatic and Ionian Region**.

Eligible applications

- ✓ Lead Partners (organisational unit / department) can only submit 1 DSPF application
- ✓ Lead Partners (organisational unit / department) cannot act as Project or Strategic Partners for other DSPF projects / applications
- ✓ Organisations / bodies (organisational unit / department) can only act as Project and Strategic Partners for one DSPF project / application

5.2 Content related Eligibility Criteria

General objectives of a DSPF project

DSPF projects must address **two or more** of the **6 DSPF objectives**. Objective **No. 1 is obligatory**, at least one other must be addressed by the project.

DSPF objectives	How to reach the objective? <i>possible options</i> (not exhausted list):
1. Have a strategic dimension, including cross-cutting and/or horizontal measures covering several Priority Areas of the Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Involvement of partner organisations of different key sectors (technology, civil society, environment, research & innovation, business, etc.) ✓ Cooperation of different stakeholders (SMEs, universities, associations, etc.) ✓ Objectives of more than one PA of the EUSDR are addressed ✓ Objectives of more than one thematic pillar of the EUSDR are addressed ✓ The project has a clear follow-up investment or policy perspective
2. Have a strategic dimension, especially in view of Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Involvement of partner organisations of different countries, especially Accession or Neighbouring Countries
3. Have connections and/or spill-over effects in the territory covered by the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Involvement of partner organisations of the 5 Countries being part of the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the Danube Region
4. Follow a multi-level governance approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Involvement of partners of different governmental levels (national, regional and local level)
5. Support the establishment of economic and social cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ E.g. Economic cooperation through the development of business ideas or networks with added value for the Danube Region ✓ Social cooperation through the development of joint actions in the fields of education, social welfare, etc.
6. Foster integration and reconciliation of Danube countries, with a particular focus on the role of young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A topic of relevance for integration of young people in the Danube Region is addressed, in particular through vocational training ✓ Provision of capacity-building activities

Special attention is paid to projects that focus on **young people** or **vocational training**.

6 DSPF Project Application

The DSPF application Pack consists of the following documents:

1. **DSPF Guidelines for Applicants**
2. **DSPF Eligibility Rules**
3. **DSPF Application Form**
4. **DSPF Project Budget Plan**
5. **DSPF Strategic Partner Form**

Document **1 & 2** are **supporting documents** for DSPF project applicants to get to know the initiative, to identify whether it is the right fund to finance the planned project and to learn specific rules and obligations applicable for future selected DSPF project Lead and Project Partners.

Document **3 & 4** form the **Application Documents**, which have to be completed by the Lead Partner in cooperation with the Project Partners and must be forwarded to the supporting PACs. The Application Documents must be completed in English.

Document **5** is the **DSPF Strategic Partner Form** that can be completed for **1 – 3** DSPF Strategic Partners, if applicable. It is not compulsory to have Strategic Partners (see also section 5.1 “Technical eligibility criteria”)

6.1 DSPF Application Form

Depending on the type of the planned DSPF project (A or B) the respective **DSPF Application Form** must be completed by the Applicant and Project Partners.

DSPF Application Form "A" for the DEVELOPMENT of future projects	DSPF Application Form "B" for the IMPLEMENTATION of an entire strategic project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All fields and their subfields marked with an * must be completed. Project Partner 2 and 3 are not compulsory, but if applicable, all fields marked with a * must be filled in. • Fill in all <u>technical information</u> about and the <u>justification for the participation</u> of the Applicant (Lead Partner) and all Project Partners. • Fill in all information about the <u>current situation</u> and the <u>future project</u>. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the activities which you plan to implement as DSPF project to prepare the future strategic project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Min. 3 – max. 6 must be selected from the list of 7 ✓ One open activity can be defined individually • <u>Describe each planned activity</u> more in detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe min. 3, max. 4 activities or work-packages which you plan to implement as DSPF project • General project management and dissemination of project results is not considered as a separate activity, it must be done by the Lead Partner with support of all Project Partners anyway.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>declaration</u> must be signed by the <u>legal representatives</u> of the Applicant (Lead Partner) and all Project Partners. 	

6.2 DSPF Project Budget Plan

The **DSPF Project Budget Plan** must be completed by the Applicant and Project Partners. It consists of **6 pages** (excel sheets): the overview page, a budget plan for the Applicant and each Project Partner and a page summarising the funding structure of the project. In general, all white boxes must be completed (if applicable).

<p><u>1st sheet:</u> Overview</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in the <u>technical information</u> regarding your project, the Applicant and each Project Partner. • The summary of the individual project budgets of the Applicant and each Project Partner are linked to the respective page and cannot be changed here.
<p><u>2nd – 5th sheet:</u> Applicant / Project Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Select the country</u> of the respective organisation in the top right corner. • Fill in the estimated project costs for each budget line. <p>1. <u>Personnel Costs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of DSPF Staff Member (in case the person is not employed yet, indicate n.n.). • Position in the Organisation / Project (e.g. Financial Manager, Project manager, Assistant, etc.). • Planned hours: indicate here the total productive hours the person is planned to work for the project. • Hourly rate: indicate here the actual gross hourly rate (incl. taxes and social security contributions) of the DSPF Staff Member; salaries of DSPF Staff Members must be in line with their tasks and responsibilities, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency. • Work tasks of the DSPF Staff Member (e.g. organising meetings, drafting studies, conducting research, financial management of expenses, PR activities, etc.); Add also for which activities of the project the person will be working (e.g. A1, A2, A3, etc.). • Planned amount: is calculated automatically (planned hours * hourly rate). <p>2. <u>Travel & accommodation costs for DSPF Staff Members and external experts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of travelling DSPF Staff Member or external expert; in case more persons are travelling to the same event, you can also indicate more than one. • Travel route & duration of travel: indicate here the departure city and the destination city, as well as the duration of the stay (number of nights). • Type of costs & calculation details: indicate here how you are going to travel, e.g. by plane, by car or by bus and if you plan to stay overnight; if your organisation pays per diems, you can also include per diems; give short calculation details. e.g. a travel from Vienna to Budapest (and return) by train is planned for 2 persons, one overnight stay is necessary: $2*50$ (train) + $2*100$ (hotel) + $2*2*25$ (daily allowances) = 400 • Project activity: Indicate here for which activity the travel was necessary and how it contributed to the implementation of the activity. • Planned amount: indicate here the result of the calculation details.

	<p>3. <u>Goods & services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good / service purchased: indicate here what good or service you plan to purchase (e.g. catering, room rent, homepage, brochure, study, etc.). • Why is this good/service necessary for the implementation of the project? Explain and name also the related project activity. • Total value of good / service (excl. VAT): indicate here the total value of the good / or service; if you plan to purchase a good of a value higher than € 400,00 in its full amount. • Planned amount: indicate here the total eligible amount (in case depreciation is applicable, only the depreciable amount excl. VAT). • Beware that financial service for the certification of project costs must be calculated for each participating organisation in any case.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in place and date as well as the name of the legal representative of the Applicant and each Project Partner. • Each legal representative must sign the respective budget plan (signed scan).
<p>6th sheet: Funding structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the calculation of the individual project budgets of the Applicant and each Partner, the total planned project costs are calculated. • To cover the calculated costs please indicate the planned funding structure.
	<p>a) <u>DSPF contribution amount</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate the planned DSPF contribution amount of min. € 70.000,00 – max. € 100.000,00). • The DSPF contribution cannot be higher than 90% or lower than 50% of the total planned project costs.
	<p>b) If applicable: <u>Third Party Contribution</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate here co-funding for this specific project from external institutions (e.g. public authority, private donor, etc.). • Do <u>not</u> indicate any Project Partners contributions or contributions from Strategic Partners here. • Do <u>not</u> indicate any general fundings to the Applicant or any Project Partner, that is not explicitly dedicated to this project; they are seen as own sources and must be declared as Partners Contribution. • Third Party Contributions cannot come from EU institutions.
	<p>c) If applicable: <u>Income generated by the project</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate here <u>income generated by the project</u> (e.g. through fees at seminars, selling of products established through the project activities, etc.).
	<p>d) <u>Project Partner Contributions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate the total Project Partners' Contribution provided by the Applicant and all Project Partners here. • Project Partner Contributions cannot come from EU institutions.

6.3 Deadlines and submission details

The following **Application Documents** must be submitted to the supporting PAC until

February 15th 2017 at 12:00 CET at the latest

- **DSPF application form** (“A” or “B”) as open word file
- **DSPF application form** (“A” or “B”) as signed scan (PDF all pages)
- **DSPF Project Budget Plan** as open Excel file
- **DSPF Project Budget Plan** as signed scan (PDF all pages)
- **DSPF Strategic Partner Form** (if applicable, max. 3) as signed scan

Applicants of **shortlisted projects** may be asked to provide the following **additional documents** concerning the Applicant (Lead Partner) upon request after the Pre-Assessment of the Advisory Board is completed (see also detailed timeline in section 4.4 “Timeline”):

- An **excerpt of a public register** providing evidence, inter alia, regarding the incorporation, legal status and power of representation of **the Applicant** (Lead Partner) (i.e. from the commercial register, association register, trade register or other register kept with a public authority) to the extent available
- Up-to-date copies of the **articles of association, statutes or other documents** in relation to the incorporation of the Applicant
- **Copy of ID / passport** of the legal representative of the Applicant (Lead Partner)
- **Notarised signature** of the legal representative of the Applicant (Lead Partner)

The following additional documents might be requested regarding the **external auditor** planned to be contracted for the certification of project costs:

- **Procurement documents** according to the DSPF eligibility rules
- An **excerpt of a public register** providing evidence, inter alia, regarding the incorporation, legal status and power of representation of **the external auditor** (i.e. from the commercial register, association register, trade register or other register kept with a public authority) to the extent available

7 Implementation of a DSPF project

7.1 Responsibilities of the Lead Partner (LP) and Project Partners (PPs)

Once the project is selected, a Grant Agreement is signed between the Lead Partner (LP) and the IB. The IB has no contractual relationship to the Project Partners. All payments will be done from the IB to the LP. The LP acts as link between the Project Partners and the IB and takes on the full responsibility for the project management, communication, implementation, reporting and coordination of activities among the project partners. The LP is in particular responsible for the financial reports of the entire DSPF project including the submission of the individual audit certification reports of each Project Partner to the IB. The LP is also responsible for the payments to all Project Partners.

Project Partners (PPs) are responsible for the implementation of certain work packages of the DSPF project. Each PP is in addition responsible for reporting the implementation progress to the LP and for subcontracting an external auditor for the certification of the incurred project expenses. The audit certification reports must be delivered to the LP in a way that all reporting deadlines for the DSPF project can be met.

7.2 Partnership Agreement

In order to ensure high quality and fulfilment of project objectives, it is compulsory to conclude a Partnership Agreement between the LP and all Project Partners. The Partnership Agreement formalises the division of mutual responsibilities and rights of the partners. The Partnership Agreement shall include the following:

1. Definition of the work packages / activities to be implemented by each Project Partner (from the detailed project description)
2. Payment Procedure from LP to PPs
3. Confirmation of respecting the DSPF regulations and reporting obligations (especially the subcontracting of an external auditor for the certification of project expenses)
4. Declaration of honour

Setting up of the Partnership Agreement is under full responsibility of the LP. The signed agreement must be provided by Applicants of **shortlisted projects** during the 2nd step of the project assessment.

7.3 Project Description & Project Budget Plan

The Lead Partner and all Project Partners must implement the activities foreseen in the **detailed Project Description**, elaborated with the IB in the 2nd step of the application process (see also chapter 3). The detailed Project Description must be in line with the budget calculated in the detailed **Project Budget Plan**. All project activities must be visible in the project budget plan. Activities that are funded by different sources cannot be part of the DSPF project.

7.4 Reporting

The implementation progress of the project activities and the project expenses must be reported to the IB by the Lead Partner submitting two written reports:

- **Midterm report: 30 days** after the midterm day of the project (“midterm report due date”), a technical and financial midterm report has to be submitted to the IB. The reports outline the project activities, outputs, results and incurred expenses for the first reporting period. In case more than 40% of the total project budget were spent in the first reporting period, an interim payment claim of 30% of the total DSPF amount can be submitted within **60 days** after the midterm day, together with the certification report of an external auditor certifying all project expenses incurred in this period.
- **Final report: 30 days** after the project is completed (“final report due date”), a final technical and financial report has to be submitted to the IB. The final reports summarise the project activities, outputs, results and total expenses incurred for the entire project period. The balance payment claim must be

submitted within **90 days** after the project is completed, together with the certification report of an external auditor certifying all project expenses.

Costs relating to the establishment of the final report, (e.g. personnel), are eligible if incurred and paid until the final report due date. Costs relating to the establishment of the external audit certification (fee for external auditor), are eligible if incurred and paid until the due date of the balance payment claim.

7.5 Payments

All payments will be done from the IB to the Lead Partner. The IB is not responsible for the payments to the Project Partners. The Lead Partner is responsible for the payments to all Project Partners.

The payment to the Lead Partners will be composed of one **pre-financing payment**, an **interim payment, if applicable**, and a **balance payment** as follows:

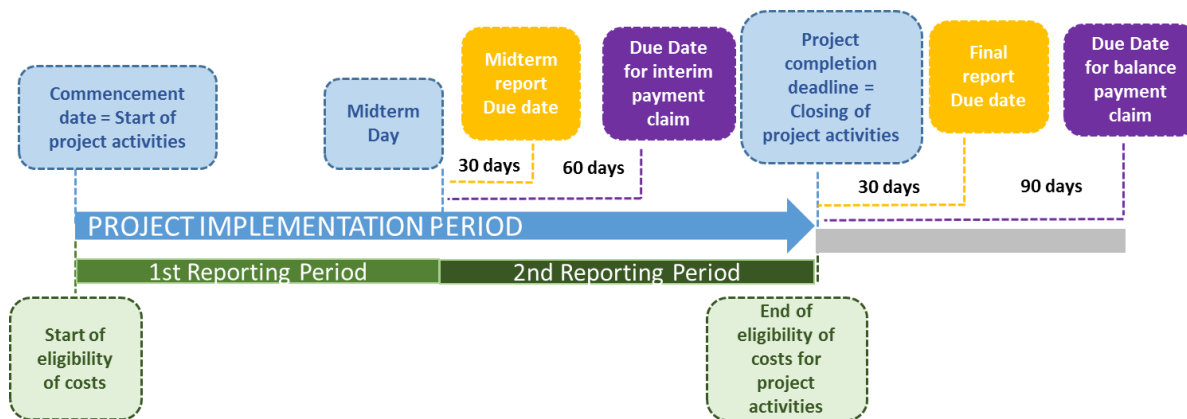
- A **pre-financing payment of 40%** of the DSPF amount will be paid after signing the Grant Agreement by the IB and the Lead Partner. This pre-payment provides the cash-flow necessary to begin project activities.
- An **interim payment claim of 30%** can be submitted by the Lead Partner within **60 days** after the midterm day of the project if:
 - at least **40%** of the approved project budget has been spent and declared with the midterm report.
 - **Certification reports** of external auditors certifying all project expenses incurred to the Lead and each Project Partner in the first project period are submitted together with the interim payment claim.

The IB reserves the right to conduct sample or detailed checks on invoices before releasing the interim payment.

- The **balance payment claim** must be submitted within **90 days** after the project is completed, together with **certification reports** of an external auditor certifying all project expenses incurred to the Lead and each Project Partner for the entire project period. In case a certification report was already submitted for the 1st project period, the 2nd certification report can only cover the 2nd project period.

It is not possible to receive a higher DSPF amount than approved in the Grant Agreement, even if the project declares higher total costs.

Overview Timeline



7.6 Ex-post availability of documents

The originals of all financial and accounting documents concerning the DSPF project need to be kept available for at least **seven years** after the date of the final payment.

8 Official language

The official language of the DSPF is **English**. All documents provided by the IB are in English and must be completed in a comprehensible English by the LP or PPs. Also the certification reports of the external auditors must be in English. Projects where a communication in English is not guaranteed will not be funded or might be terminated due to that reason.