



# Guidelines for Priority Area Coordinators and Steering Groups

## Call 1

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### Table of contents

1. Basic principles .....	2
2. The management structure of START .....	3
3. Role of PACs and their Steering Group in the START process .....	5
3.1 Dissemination of calls .....	5
3.2 Formal Check by IB.....	6
3.3 Project pre-selection by the PACs and their Steering Group .....	6
3.4 Plausibility check and final selection.....	7
3.5 Information of PACs during project implementation .....	8
4. Timeline of the 1 <sup>st</sup> Call .....	8
5. Review, monitoring and reporting of START .....	8
6. Contact .....	9

This document provides general information for Priority Area Coordinators and their Steering Groups, who are to be involved in the implementation of the **new pilot initiative** "START - Danube Region Project Fund".

Guidelines for Applicants are to be found in the "**application pack**", which is available at [www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/start](http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/start).

For the **application form and procedure**, please refer to section 3.1 below.



## 1. Basic principles

Currently project idea owners are suffering from a **lack of funding** to initiate and to implement projects with relevance for the Danube Region. The National Contact Points of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) agreed on 8 July 2013 on the need to provide financial support to facilitate the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

### Objective

- The **objective of START**, in accordance with Commission Decision C(2013) 6180 of 27.09.2013, is to "kick-start project development in the Danube Region and to facilitate the financing of transnational projects".
- START is to help organisations and institutions in the Danube Region to develop and implement their project ideas. The provided support is in the form of **Seed Money**, meaning that beneficiaries receive an early pre-financing for their projects. Support is mainly addressed for small organisations with limited resources to implement their projects.

### A pilot initiative

As START is a **pilot-initiative**, a flexible approach is used and adaptations may be brought during implementation, to best reflect the needs that may occur and provide the most appropriate support.

### Calls for project proposals

START will run until 2016 and two calls for projects will be organised.

### Budget

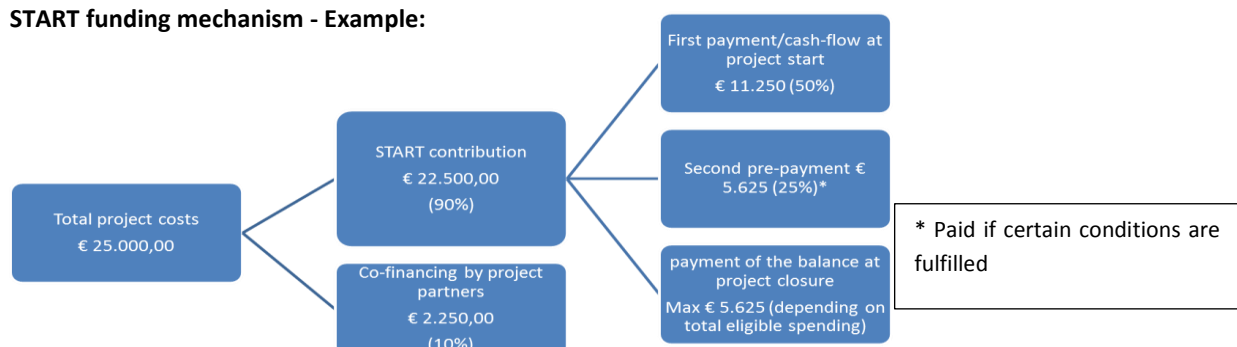
The total allocation to START is 900.000€, co-financed for 95% by the European Commission and for 5% by the City of Vienna.

### START = Seed Money

START provides small EU grants that help organisations to prepare and/or implement their project. The EU grants range between 10.000€ and max. 40.000€.

Contrary to most of EU-funding schemes, START provides "Seed Money", which means that a large pre-financing (50% of the total grant) will be paid to the project beneficiaries at the start of the project. This advance will provide project partners with the cash-flow necessary to finance their activities. A second pre-payment of 25% will be paid at midterm, if certain conditions are fulfilled (see guidelines for applicants, section 8 ). On the other hand, and to guarantee the commitment of the beneficiaries, they will have to co-finance 10% of the project's total costs.

### START funding mechanism - Example:





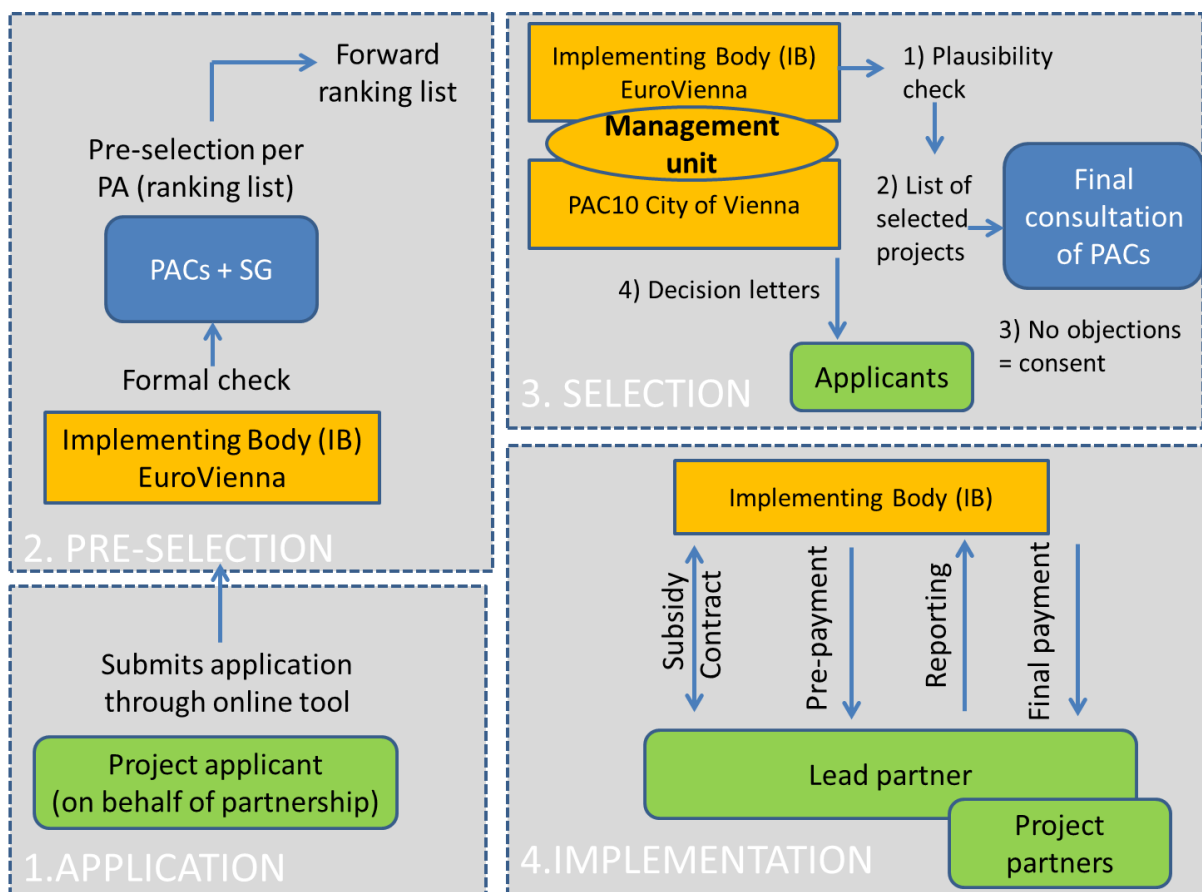
## 2. The management structure of START

A decentralised and cooperative approach was chosen to ensure the involvement of all key-actors in the implementation of START. In particular this approach will guarantee that PACs and their Steering Groups are given a central role in pre-selection and decision-making.

**Priority Area 10: Institutional Capacity and Cooperation (PAC 10)** coordinated by the City of Vienna, has been entrusted by the European Commission to set up START.

The operational implementation of START is ensured by **EuroVienna EU-consulting & -management GmbH**, which is an affiliated entity of the City of Vienna (hereinafter referred to as "*Implementing Body - IB*").

**Overview of the management structure and mechanisms of START:**





## Who is doing what?

Body	Main responsibilities / role
<b>European Commission</b>  <b>DG Regional Policy</b>  <b>(EC)</b>	As the main financing organisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-finances START (95% of the 900.000€ is provided by the EC)</li> <li>• Receives regular reports on implementation</li> <li>• Can conduct audits / on-the-spot checks</li> </ul>
<b>PACs and their Steering Group (SG)</b>	Involvement in the selection and monitoring of START projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicising of START calls (e.g. website, personal meetings, mailing lists)</li> <li>• Pre-selection of projects submitted to the Priority Area concerned</li> <li>• Inform the IB about the results of the pre-selection process (list of assessed projects incl. ranking and comments)</li> <li>• Receive the results of the plausibility check and planned decisions (possibility to comment)</li> <li>• Where needed, support to the IB and the projects during project implementation</li> <li>• Receive a copy of project reports (midterm and final) and START overall reports</li> </ul>
<b>PAC10</b>  <b>Kurt Puchinger, City of Vienna</b>  <b>Management Unit</b>	Coordination of START, incl.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in project assessment (plausibility check)</li> <li>• Validation of selected projects (taking into consideration the thematic and geographic balance between projects and the available budget)</li> <li>• Communication of decision to PACs and applicants</li> <li>• Reporting to European Commission, City of Vienna, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Implementing Body (IB)</b>  <b>EuroVienna</b>	Implementation of START, incl.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation and dissemination of calls, information to PACs</li> <li>• Coordination of the formal and the plausibility check of project proposals</li> <li>• Contracting of selected projects</li> <li>• Monitoring and verification of project's activities, outputs and expenditure</li> <li>• Payments to lead partners, where needed recovery procedure</li> <li>• Certification of project expenditure (outsourced to an auditor)</li> </ul>
<b>Lead applicant / lead partner (LP)</b>	At the application stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinating the preparation of the project application</li> <li>• Signing and submission of the project application on behalf of the project partnership</li> </ul> At the implementation stage (if the project was selected): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signs the subsidy contract with the IB</li> <li>• Receives the advance payment(s) from the IB and coordinates project</li> </ul>



	<p>spending (it is up to the lead partner, if he/she transfers a share of the pre-financing to the other partners)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In case of recovery procedure, reimburses unduly paid funds to the IB (no matter whether the LP or another partner is responsible for the unduly paid funds)</li> <li>• Coordinates and submits project reports to the IB (activity and financial reports)</li> <li>• Receives the payment of the balance and transfers the corresponding shares to the other project partner(s).</li> <li>• Keeps project documents in archive after project closure ➔ Details will be contained in the subsidy contract</li> </ul>
<b>Project partners (incl. lead partner)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the project activities according to the agreed terms and eligibility rules.</li> <li>• Provision of information, documentation upon request by the IB and in case of audits or on-the-spot checks by an auditor.</li> </ul>

### 3. Role of PACs and their Steering Group in the START process

PACs and their Steering Groups are to play a central role in the preparation and pre-selection process, and be informed of the implementation of selected projects. These three functions are presented hereafter:

#### 3.1 Dissemination of calls

##### STEP 1 - Publicity of the call and dissemination of the application form:

The application form and guidelines for applicants are available for download on the homepage of PA 10 - Institutional capacity and cooperation: <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu> from 18<sup>th</sup> of July until 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2014.

PACs and their Steering Group are invited to publicise the call among their stakeholders, through their website, mailings, etc.

##### Basics of the application procedure

The application form is a word template to be filled in by applicants and uploaded/submitted through an online application tool by the end of the call. To avoid that too many applications are submitted, the online application tool will only be opened from 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of September. It will close at 24:00 CET on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September. After this, applications cannot be uploaded and will not be assessed.

##### STEP 2 – Support to applicants

During the call, PACs may be contacted by applicants asking for support in completing the application form and/or in defining their project. For technical questions, PACs may of course contact EuroVienna for clarification. A link to the websites of the PAs is provided in the Guidelines for the Applicants.



### 3.2 Formal Check by IB

After the closing of the call (17th of September), the IB will conduct a formal check of all applications submitted. Following points will be checked:

- Is the application complete and submitted in the right way?
- Is the applicant (partnership) eligible?
- Is the project eligible? (location, requested amount)

Incomplete applications or applications where formal criteria are not fulfilled will not be subject to further assessment.

The content of the project and the relevance to the Priority Area and the Danube Region will not be checked by the IB.

For each Priority Area, the result of the formal check incl. rejected applications will be communicated to PACs.

### 3.3 Project pre-selection by the PACs and their Steering Group

After the formal check (approx. 26<sup>th</sup> of September), PACs receive:

- **list of all applications** submitted to the Priority Area including result of the formal check
- all **project application forms** of the Priority Area that passed the formal check
- **list of all applications** from all Priority Areas that **passed the formal check**
- **template** for documentation of the results of the pre-selection

PACs and their Steering Group are experts in the matters addressed by the project applicants and can best assess the relevance of the project applications for the EUSDR and in particular for their Priority Area.

Each PA is free to organise this process as they deem appropriate. It is expected that PACs with the involvement of their Steering Group conduct a sound and documented pre-selection of project proposals which are best expected to contribute to the Action Plan of the Priority Area.

**The main questions to be addressed during the pre-selection are the following:**

<b>Applicant and project partners:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the partnership relevant for the purpose of the project?</li> </ul> <p>→ <i>START is designed to provide financial support to project partnerships which otherwise could not start project activities (e.g. small organisations). In order to ensure the added-value of START support, attention needs to be paid to the nature of applicants, their previous experiences and actual needs.</i></p>
<b>Relevance of the project:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the project of public interest?</li> <li>• Is the project relevant for the EUSDR and in particular for the PA addressed (contribution of the project to the PA's Action Plan)?</li> </ul> <p>→ <b>if the applicant chose the wrong PA for his project, PACs are to inform the IB immediately to enable pre-selection by the correct PA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If START funding is requested to finance a specific part of a larger project: is the overall project relevant for the EUSDR?</li> <li>• Is the requested EU grant adequate/justified to reach the project objectives and implement project activities?</li> </ul>
<b>Macro-regional dimension or impact of the project:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the project activities taking place in the Danube Region?</li> <li>• Are expected project results of relevance for the Danube Region?</li> </ul>



<b>Professional experience of the applicant/partnership,</b> which can be assessed through the quality of the application form:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the application clear (language, style), and concise?</li> <li>• Is the planned project well described, realistic and feasible?</li> <li>• Is there a consistency between planned project objectives, activities and budget?</li> </ul>
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This pre-selection is to be conducted until the 21<sup>st</sup> of October.

PACs will provide a ranking list as a result of their pre-selection procedure including a short summary of the outcomes (positive/negative aspects, reasons for pre-selection/exclusion) and send it to the IB. The first project on the list is of highest priority to the PA and best fulfils the above criteria. With sending the ranking list, the official support of the PAC to the projects is declared. The provision of a letter of support is not requested.

### 3.4 Plausibility check and final selection

Based on the ranking provided by the PACs, a final eligibility and plausibility check is conducted by the START "Management Unit" composed by PAC10 Vienna and the Implementing Body. During this process, the Management Unit reserves the right to contact the applicants and the supporting PACs for clarifications and/or provision of missing information.

**Following elements will be assessed:**

<b>Adequacy between project objectives, planned activities and budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it plausible to reach the given objectives with the activities and the budget? Is the planned budget adequate to implement the project?              ➔ <i>In case the budget is deemed too high or too low in relation to the project activities, the Management Unit reserves the right to request clarifications from the applicants and to propose that the project is approved under conditions (e.g. revision of the overall budget, of the budget structure and/or of the project activities)</i> </li> </ul>
<b>Expected change to the status quo:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In case the project is a part of an overall project (Type A): Is the relationship between the START-part of the project and the overall project clear and logic?</li> <li>• In case the project is the implementation of a small project (Type B): Is the macro-regional dimension of the expected results plausible?</li> </ul>
<b>Indicators and targets:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the planned indicators and targets realistic?</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the timeline for implementation of activities plausible?</li> </ul>

START aims at supporting projects from **all Priority Areas** and from the **entire Danube Region**. The Management Unit therefore also considers the thematic and geographic balance between submitted applications and the available budget for the call.

The Management Unit establishes a final list of projects including planned decisions:

- Approval
- Approval under conditions (including conditions of approval)
- Non-approval





This list is sent to the PACs mid of November, PACs have the opportunity to send comments within a week. If no comments are sent, the principle of tacit consent is applied.

Selected and non-selected applicants are notified of the decision until the End of November. The PACs will receive a copy of the decision letter for projects of their PA.

### 3.5 Information of PACs during project implementation

The IB will contact the PACs concerned in case of major difficulties with a project implemented under the Priority Area. In such case, PACs may be asked to **provide support** e.g. in establishing communication with the project partners or in requesting information. PACs will receive a **copy of the midterm and final project report** for the concerned projects.

Project partners are expected to provide any information requested by the PACs during and or after the project implementation. This is specified in the subsidy contract.

## 4. Timeline of the 1<sup>st</sup> Call

18 <sup>th</sup> July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch of the 1st Call on PA10 website</li> <li>email to PACs for publicity of the call</li> </ul>
Until 14 <sup>th</sup> September 2014	Applicants can prepare their application (word template)
15 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> September 2014 (until 24.00 CET)	<b>Online submission of applications</b> (identification of relevant PA in the application)
18 <sup>th</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2014	<b>Formal check by IB</b> – forwarding total list to all PACs
26 <sup>th</sup> September to 21 <sup>st</sup> October	<b>Pre-selection by PACs and SG</b> – forwarding a ranking list of all pre-assessed projects to the IB
22 <sup>nd</sup> October – Mid. November	<b>Final plausibility check</b> by Management Unit
until End November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Outcomes of the selection to PACs</b> - possibility for PACs to comment within one week</li> <li><b>Decision letters</b> to applicants</li> </ul>
Until mid-December	<b>Contracting</b> with selected applicants
2015	<b>Project implementation</b>

## 5. Review, monitoring and reporting of START

**Review:** As START is a pilot-initiative, possible adaptations may be decided after the first call, to adjust procedures if needed. PACs will be consulted by the IB on this matter.

**Overall monitoring:** a regular monitoring of project activities and spending will be done by the IB by using the online reporting tool. This tool provides an overview the progress of the projects and the overall spending progress of the facility.





**Reporting:** The IB will report by-annually to the European Commission / DG Regional Policy on the state of implementation of START. PACs, as members of the Selection Committee will receive a summary of these reports. In particular, the progress of the Facility will be documented and following data will be provided: number of projects submitted, financed; number of activities and projects completed; number of countries and Priority Areas addressed.

## 6. Contact

If you have any question regarding this document and procedures applicable to START, please contact:

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