

Frequently Asked Questions:

Sector Skills Alliances (SSA) – Knowledge Alliances (KA)

Please note that these explanations are only valid for the Alliances projects and not applicable to the other actions of the Erasmus+ programme such as the Strategic Partnerships.

1. General questions

Q. Could you please explain the difference between the old LLP "budget based" system and the new "unit costs" system?

A. In the previous **Lifelong Learning programme** the co-financing mechanism was "**budget based**". This means that the final amount of the co-funding (grant) was calculated as a fixed percentage of the project's total **real** costs incurred by the project (i.e. staff costs, travel costs, subsistence costs, equipment costs and sub-contracting costs). As a result, the "EU grant" represented a maximum percentage of these costs after a detailed analysis of their eligibility.

In the Erasmus+ programme a new "**unit based**" grant system has been introduced for the Alliances projects, in which the total grant will be determined by applying a unit cost only to the staff component.

This new way of calculating the EU grant is much simpler for projects. It will streamline and reduce the time needed for the financial and administrative management of projects both for applicants and beneficiaries, and thus be more cost effective and economically sound than the previous item-based budgeting.

The "unit costs" system should be considered as a means **of calculating the whole EU grant** and not as a reimbursement of staff costs.

For each work package and related activities, you have to estimate the number of staff days needed per category and country. The number of staff days shall then be multiplied by the relevant "unit costs" indicated in the E+ Programme Guide (p.115 & 116 for Knowledge Alliances, p.125 & 126 for Sector Skills Alliances). The total amount will constitute the EU grant, i.e. the EU contribution to all kind of project costs (i.e. salaries but also meetings, travels, subsistence costs, etc.) in relation to any project activity (e.g. project management, curriculum development, intellectual outputs, dissemination, etc.).

At reporting stage, payments will be determined by the real man working days on the project considering that those man working days have been clearly linked to the project and correspond to the amount of work needed to lead the planned activities. Man working days will be considered for persons having worked as staff for one of the partner organisations.

Estimated Budget							
Work Packages	Old Budget Based System		New Unit cost system				
	Heading	Amount	Involvement of Staff days	Description	Unit Costs *	Amount	
<p><u>WP1: Preparation</u> examples: analysis of the state of art in the field (literature, studies,visits, meetings, invitation / contact with experts) , data on the best practices, etc.</p> <p><u>WP2: Management</u> examples: planning, finances, coordination and communication between partners, organisation of the project meetings, etc.</p> <p><u>WP3: Implementation</u> Examples: activities relating to development and testing of intellectual outputs/tangible results of the projects (curricula, pedagogical materials, studies, open educational resources, etc.)</p> <p><u>WP4: Quality assurance</u> Examples: activities that aim to guarantee that the quality of the project processes and results meet the predetermined standards.</p> <p><u>WP5: Evaluation</u> Examples: activities which aim to determine whether the project planning and implementation are effective and the planned results / expected impact are met Evaluation can be internal or external.</p> <p><u>WP6: Dissemination and exploitation</u> Examples: activities relating to information spreading and awareness raising and mainstreaming and multiplication of results.</p>	Staff	185.000	923 staff days = Total number of days to be indicated in the application form	840	staff days in implementing the projects	250	210.000
	Travel and subsistence	30.000		40	staff days booking travels, travelling	250	10.000
	Equipment	5.500		18	staff days for feasibility studies for selecting/buying/renting equipments	250	4.500
	Subcontracting	40.000		12	staff days in drafting tenders specifications, setting up the call, collecting different bids and evaluating the best offer.	250	3.000
	Other costs	9.500		5	staff days for feasibility studies for selecting/buying software/materials or copying documents for projects meetings .	250	1.250
	Indirect cost (example 6,8%)	18.438		8	staff days setting up offices or supplying office furnitures for project staff/implementation.	250	2.000
	Total Costs	288.438					
	Eu Grant 80% of total costs	230.750		Eu Grant new unit cost system		230.750	
	Own contribution to the project (Total cost - EU Grant)	57.688		Own contribution to the project by applicants required to cover all the costs related to the implementation of the project corresponding to Total cost - EU Grant <i>not to be reported in the application form</i>			

* For the sake of the clarity, the staffs have been merged in one single category and an average unit cost rate has been considered in the example.

Q. Following the guidelines of the Erasmus+ Guide on p. 193 it is requested for each organization to upload a Financial Capacity Form which unfortunately we cannot find.

A. The financial capacity form is not yet available. Therefore no applications will be considered ineligible if this document is missing in the participant Portal. Selected applicants will be contacted at a later stage to complete this form.

Q. Do all partners need to fill in and sign Declaration on Honour?

A. The Declaration on honour must be filled-in and signed only by the legal representative of the applicant institution that represents the partnership. Partners are not requested to sign the Declaration as the applicant institution acts on behalf of the whole partnership.

Templates are available at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/knowledge-alliances-sector-skills-alliances-eacs1113_en

Q. Do we have to attach Mandate Letters from all partners when submitting our application?

A. Mandate letters are not required at the stage of the application submission. The Declaration on honour signed by the applicant organisation includes the following statement: *I also declare that all the partners participating in this project have agreed with the content of the application and have confirmed their intention to carry out the tasks described accordingly.* Mandate letters signed by the partners are a contractual requirement and will therefore be requested after the selection of proposals prior to the signature of the Grant Agreement.

Q. Where can I find a distance calculator supported by the European Commission for defining the distances for mobility activities?

The distance calculator is available on http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/distance_en.htm.

Q. Could you please explain the difference between “Quality Assurance” and “Evaluation” types of work packages.

A. Quality assurance/quality management plan is a general plan of the partnership in order to prevent problems in implementation and ensure the quality of the process and the results. Quality assurance is more about the making sure that the quality of the processes is monitored. You have to foresee there the quality assurance measures and indicators for verifying whether the measures are met.

Evaluation is a specific activity addressed to assess if the quality of outputs and/or processes or results is acceptable. It can be internal and external. For SSA proposals, an independent external quality assessment/expert review is recommended (Erasmus+ Programme Guide p.124)

Q. Can organisations from Partner Countries participate?

A. Yes they can, provided that they bring an essential added value to the project. In other words, the participation of organisations from Partner Countries must provide genuine added value to the project because of the specific skills, experiences or expertise that these organisations will bring to the project and that prove to be essential for the achievement of the project's objectives and/or to ensure a significantly higher quality of the project outputs.

2. Sector Skills Alliance specific questions:

Q. Would a project for the chemical and pharmaceutical industry, where a skills imbalance has been clearly identified, be eligible as "Sector Skills Alliance" within this year's Erasmus+ call?

A. The Call for Proposals for Sector Skills Alliances is **only open for the following six sectors:**

- Textile/Clothing/Leather;
- Commerce;
- Advanced Manufacturing;
- Information and Communication Technologies;
- Environmental technologies (Eco-Innovation);
- Cultural and Creative sectors.

Q. If we are partner in a Sector Skills Alliance, can we participate in another Alliance project as applicant, partner or associated partner?

A. One organization can only be involved in one Sector Skills Alliance application at the same time. Therefore your organization cannot be part of two or more Sector Skills Alliances applications but may be involved in other Actions of the Programme.

3. Knowledge Alliance specific questions

Q. Could you please define what an "enterprise" is?

A. An enterprise is defined in the E+ Programming Guide (p. 256) as "any undertaking engaged in an economic activity regardless of its size, legal form or of the economic sector in which it operates."

Q. What is the difference between an Knowledge Alliance and a Strategic Partnership?

A. In certain cases Knowledge Alliances and Strategic Partnerships could have a similar set-up, ie. involving HEIs and companies as core partners in the project. However, whereas this is a main requirement for the Knowledge Alliances (i.e. eligibility criteria), it is encouraged for Strategic Partnerships (i.e. award criteria).

The focus of the Knowledge Alliances is the cooperation between higher education institutions and companies which implies joint comprehensive activities aimed at promoting innovation within and through higher education institutions.

The focus of Strategic Partnerships is to make education and training systems more relevant to the labour market, by equipping young people with the skills and competences that are needed now and in the future by employers. Cooperation between higher education institutions and other education and training fields and youth organisations is encouraged, as well as between universities and companies, regional authorities etc.