Programme de coopération transfrontalière 2007-2013 cofinancé par le **FEDER**
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Terms of Reference

for the 2 Seas Cluster initiative

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Background information

In the first semester of 2012, after the closure of the 9th Call for Proposal, the Interreg IVA 2 Seas Programme reached its maturity with 86 approved projects. Most of the approved projects are well under way and the first results are being delivered. This is why the Programme decided to launch its capitalisation actions during the course of 2012.

The 2 Seas capitalisation consists of 3 axes:
1. Territorial capitalisation
2. Thematic capitalisation
3. The Ongoing Programme evaluation

The 2 Seas Cluster initiative is fully part of axis 2, notably the thematic capitalisation.

1. What is the aim of the 2 Seas thematic capitalisation?

The 2 Seas thematic capitalisation aims at **"consolidating, valorising and disseminating the achievements"** of the projects/networks in the current programming period as well as supporting **"development activities"** to prepare for the future.

This is the "**distinctiveness" of the 2 Seas thematic capitalisation**: the actions to be developed should first of all valorise the existing and, whenever possible, build on their achievements to take a step forward and inform the future.

Thematic clusters will be developed as part of the 2 Seas thematic capitalisation.

2. Why a cluster initiative?

The "cluster initiative" aims at creating strategic cooperation between approved projects and between potential competent/relevant organisations outside 2 Seas projects. This is to **strengthen and enlarge the impact of the Programme** for the benefit of the 2 Seas territories.
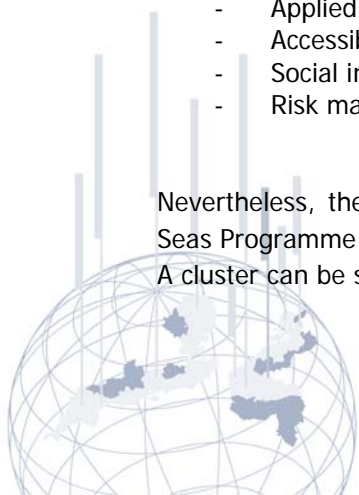
Therefore the **2 Seas cluster initiative should be open to all relevant and interested actors in the area** regarding the key thematic priorities where a cluster can be developed within the Programme.

The Programme authorities have decided to particularly focus the thematic clusters on four main themes:
- Applied research, Innovation, and business support
- Accessibility of the area
- Social inclusion
- Risk management in the framework of Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

Nevertheless, the 2 Seas capitalisation is open to the 16 relevant themes as implemented in the 2 Seas Programme (see Annex 1 at the end of this document).
A cluster can be submitted under priorities 1, 2 and 3 of the 2 Seas Operational Programme.

3. What is a cluster and what is not a cluster?

A condition of a 2 Seas cluster is that 2 or more 2 Seas approved projects come together to work on a given theme in order to capitalise their results. This is the first key differences with a regular project.

Therefore a cluster cannot be considered as a follow-on of an approved project, since its rationale is based on the pooling together of different experiences realised in the 2 Seas Programme.

As the cluster is the key tool of the 2 Seas thematic capitalisation, its aim must be clearly tailored to this. The aim of the 2 Seas capitalisation is stated in paragraph 1 of this Terms of Reference.

The cluster is not the preparation phase for a future project. The cluster must first of all consolidate, valorize and disseminate the current programming period achievements.

A cluster can support development activities (notably in its Phase 2, see paragraph 4 later in this document) and these activities can inform the emergence of future projects but it cannot include directly in its actions and budget the preparation for future project proposals.

4. How to set up and implement a thematic cluster?

➔ The life-cycle of the thematic cluster:

The life-cycle of the thematic cluster encompasses two main phases: Phase 1: consolidation, valorisation and dissemination of the results; Phase 2: future development together (optional).
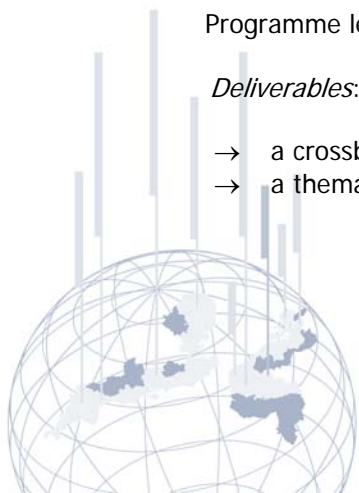
As for the project development in the 2 Seas Programme, a preparation phase should precede the submission of the application. This period of preparation is necessary to create a cluster around a shared theme of interest; form a 'common cluster' working group; analyse the results achieved and consolidate the shared interest; develop a work plan for delivery of Phases 1 and 2 (principally in the form of an application for the cluster).

- **Phase 1: Valorisation and dissemination of the results obtained** to maximize the impact at Programme level

   Deliverables: *It is **mandatory** to be delivered ad minima at 2 Seas Programme level:*

   →   a crossborder thematic event
   →   a thematic publication (electronic and paper)

The proposed deliverables will need to follow the Programme visual and editorial style of which guidance is part of the application pack. Dissemination will be the responsibility of the approved clusters, but assistance will be provided to reach the widest target audience possible.

Clear milestones will have to be defined in the cluster proposal.

- **Phase 2: "Future development**" in order to exploit synergies and make a step forward towards the future.

Deliverables: Precise deliverables will be defined as a result of the work undertaken in the previous phase. Actions should help inform future development potential within the theme. Examples of deliverables: Case studies, Baseline study and options analysis, Pilot actions.

Clear milestones will have to be defined in the cluster proposal.

Although this phase should help build the basis for the future by delivering concrete outputs relevant for the chosen theme, the aim of this phase cannot be the preparation of a future project and its deliverables cannot be a project idea or an Application Form.

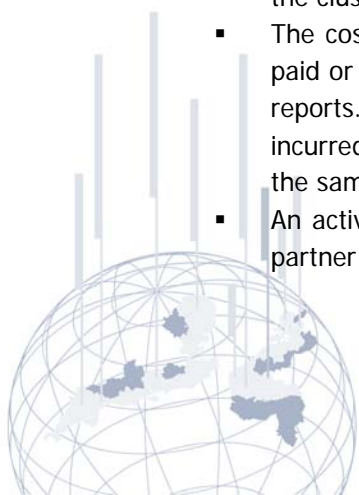Please note that whereas Phase 1 is mandatory, Phase 2 is optional.

Total duration of the cluster:

- The total duration of the clusters cannot exceed 18 months excluding its preparation phase.
- The implementation of cluster activities cannot go beyond the 30/09/2015.

➔ **Partnership composition:**

General principles
- The Programme strongly recommends that "formal partners" are located in all 4 Member States. However, as a minimum requirement, the cluster must include at least 3 formal partners from 3 different Member States and located in the 2 Seas Programme area.
- A formal partner can be located in the Programme Priority 4 area (made up of the 2 Seas and France(Channel)–England areas) only if it is a beneficiary (project partner or lead partner) of one or more 2 Seas projects approved under priority 4.
- It is mandatory that at least 1 formal partner is based in the UK Programme area.
- The cluster should include at least 2 formal partners coming from 2 different approved 2 Seas projects.
- The partnership should be composed of formal partners (mandatory) who are the only beneficiaries receiving ERDF, and can also include "associated partners".
- The associated partners can be any relevant organisation competent on the theme willing to be involved, share knowledge/results and undertake communication and dissemination for the cluster.
- The costs of travel and accommodation incurred by the associated partners can be directly paid or reimbursed by the formal partners who will be entitled to claim them in the progress reports. For audit trail requirements, the Programme strongly recommends that the costs incurred by a given associated partner are paid or reimbursed by a formal partner based in the same country.
- An active role of the associated partners is expected as defined in the respective associate partner declarations.

- In case the partnership does not cover all 4 Member States, the results of the cluster should be in any case disseminated in all 4 Member States and the mandatory outputs should be delivered in the 3 official languages of the Programme.

Geographical representation
- The cluster should be open to other relevant organisations not part of a 2 Seas approved projects.
- Experiences from other European Territorial Cooperation programmes or other relevant EU programmes are welcomed.
- The participating organisations should in principle be based in the 2 Seas Programme area. However, in justified circumstances and based on a clear added value to the cluster's aim, organisations based outside the 2 Seas Programme area can take part in the cluster. In this case, these organisations can participate in the cluster as associated partners.

Size
- Clusters are free to build up the partnership; however, the Programme strongly recommends no more than 10 formal partners are involved in a cluster. This is to avoid complexity and concentrate resources on the deliverables of the cluster.

➔ Cluster budget:

Indicative amount
- The budget of the cluster should be coherent, justified and in relation to the size, the activities and the results.
- An indicative maximum budget of 300.000€ should be allocated to Phase 1.
- An indicative maximum budget of 300.000€ should be allocated to Phase 2.
- The thresholds indicated can be exceeded if justified by the size of the cluster and the types and scope of the actions to be implemented.

ERDF Rate
- The ERDF rate will be 100%.
- No in-kind contributions or shared costs will therefore be eligible.
- This funding is given to the formal partners by way of reimbursement from the Programme following the submission and the assessment of Progress reports.

Rationale of the breakdown
- In Phase 1, an appropriate share of the budget should be devoted to the two mandatory deliverables: organisation of a cross border thematic event and a thematic publication on behalf of the 2 Seas Programme. The 2 deliverables should be representative of the Programme area and respect a dedicated Programme guideline regarding the Programme identity and the minimum audience to be reached. Applicants need to be aware that a large share of the budget of phase 1 could be absorbed by the realisation and dissemination of these 2 mandatory deliverables.

- Considering the mandatory deliverables of Phase 1, the budget distribution per partner should take into account that there will be a small number of partners taking on most of the costs of this phase.
- Linked to the previous point, it is expected that only a small amount of budget is allocated to BL1 in this phase.

Budget lines
- Costs falling under staff (BL1), external expertise and services (BL3), travel and accommodation (BL4), equipment (BL5) and validation of expenditures (BL7) are eligible.
- Administrative costs (BL2) and investments (BL6) are not eligible.
- Only travel and accommodation costs (BL4) are eligible for the preparation period.
- Only formal partners dispose of a budget in the cluster and can claim ERDF. However these partners can take on part of the travel and accommodation costs (BL4) of associated partners and will be able to claim these costs and get reimbursed.
- In order to avoid any audit trail issues, it is recommended that the formal partner pays directly the travel and accommodation costs of the associated partner and avoid any forms of reimbursement.
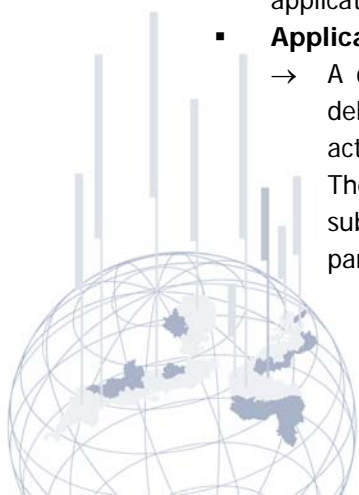
Eligibility period of the expenditure
- The duration of a cluster is 18 months starting from the date of start up of Phase 1 as indicated in the approved cluster Application Form. In any case, clusters activities should end by the 30/09/2015 at the latest.
- The start of the eligibility of the expenditure is the 01/01/13.
- The end of the eligibility of the expenditure is 18 months maximum after the starting date of Phase 1 + 3 extra months for the administrative closure.
- The management and coordination costs incurred within these 3 extra months are eligible.

5. Practical modalities of the Call for clusters

➔ Submission

- **Call for Clusters**: an ongoing Call for Clusters from the 15th March to 15th November 2013 with submission deadlines on **17th May, 12th July, 13th September, 15th November**. This calendar is subject to availability of ERDF funds. Depending on the degree of success of the call within the first deadlines, the Programme might decide to close the call earlier than foreseen.
- **Deadline**: An application pack should be submitted by 12 o'clock midday of the relevant deadline at the Joint Technical Secretariat in electronic and paper as specified in the application form.
- **Application pack:** it should be composed of:
  - → A cluster Application form including a full description of the cluster and the actions, deliverables and budget required for Phase 1. For Phase 2, a description of intended actions, deliverables and budget is expected.
    The ORIGINAL signed paper version and electronic version of the Application is submitted in English (sheet *summaries_FR_NL* must be filled in in the languages of the partnership);

- → A letter of support from each formal partner
- → An <u>associated partner declaration</u> (for each associated partners) explaining the reason of their involvement in the cluster and their contribution to the cluster activities.
- → A de <u>minimis declaration</u> (in the case of an entity undertaking an economic activity)

- ▪ **Annexes**: Beside the points listed under the previous bullet point, the only annexes that are allowed are an organisation chart and the financial guarantee for the Lead Partner. The financial guarantee is required only if the Lead Partner is a not for profit organisation (not considered as a 'Public Equivalent Body') or a private company (SME).

Selection process

- ▪ **Assessment of the cluster:** this will be based only on the cluster Application Form and its annexes.

  Please note that Phase 2 is optional. If clusters wish to undertake a Phase 2, an initial implementation plan for Phase 2 is expected with the cluster application. Programme feedback will be given to help better meet Programme expectations for this phase as part of the recommendations in the Programme notification letter of approval for phase 1.

  This initial implementation plan will have to be further specified at the end of Phase 1. The detailed planning of Phase 2 will be assessed by the Programme before its actual implementation. This assessment will also take into account the achievements of phase 1[1].

- ▪ **Eligibility criteria:** the Application Form must be in line with the Programme eligibility criteria. We advise the applicants to carefully read these eligibility criteria and to take them into account when filling in the cluster Application Form.

- ▪ **Quality assessment**: the quality of the Cluster will be assessed by the Programme according to the 6 key criteria:
  - ✓ Relevance of the cluster in the 2 Seas Programme
  - ✓ Quality and coherence of the approach \
  - ✓ Quality of results and visibility at crossborder level
  - ✓ Quality of the management
  - ✓ Quality of the partnership
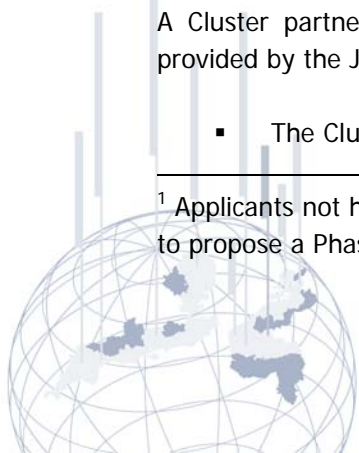 - ✓ Budget and finances

6. Monitoring process:

Once the cluster is approved, a Subsidy Contract between the Managing Authority of the 2 Seas Programme and the Cluster LP will have to be signed. The pre-filled template will be sent to the LP by the JTS.
A Cluster partnership agreement will also have to be signed by all partners. A template will be provided by the JTS.

- ▪ The Cluster will have to submit **two progress reports**:

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[1] Applicants not having submitted a Phase 2 in their initial approved bid may still have the possibility to propose a Phase 2 at the end of Phase 1.

→ The 1st report should be provided to the JTS at the end of Phase 1. This progress report should also include a modified cluster Application Form with more detailed information about Phase 2 (if relevant).

→ The second report shall be delivered at the end of Phase 2.

→ An extra financial report can be submitted for the 3 additional months dedicated to the closure of the cluster. Costs can also include the translation of communication products incurred and paid within 3 months after the end of the implementation period of phase 1. Specific guidance on the closure of the cluster will be made available.

→ Please note that costs will have to be certified following the usual process valid for the regular projects.

→ Organisations that are already project partners in a 2 Seas approved project will have to select their First Level Controller (FLC) according to the relevant national system in place and in compliance with the applicable public procurement rules. Already selected FLC, in the framework of an approved 2 Seas project, cannot be automatically the FLC of a cluster. In order to act as FLC in a Cluster, a specific validation (so-called "Annex 4" document) signed by the competent Approbation Body at national level is required.

→ No major modification linked to budget readjustments can be submitted during the cluster implementation. Clusters will have the possibility to adapt their budget at the end of Phase 1 if they intend to submit a phase 2 for approval.

ANNEX 1 – List of thematic priorities of the 2 Seas thematic capitalisation

Thematic priority
(Sustainable) tourism
Accessibility of the area
Common heritage
Education / Language training
Energy efficiency / Renewable energies
Entrepreneurship and Business Support
Integrated Coastal Zone Management
Leisure and Social tourism
Low Carbon Economy
Nature and Landscape management
Promoting Knowledge Transfer
Research & Innovation
Resources management
Risks management
Services / Health care
Social inclusion