



An Roinn Caiteachais  
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe  
Department of Public  
Expenditure and Reform



Funded by  
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# Partnership Agreement 2021-27

SMARTER



GREENER, CARBON FREE



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CLOSER TO CITIZENS





## Partnership Agreement - Article 10(6)

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1. Selection of policy objectives and the JTF specific objective

Reference: point (a) of Article 11(1) CPR

Table 1: Selection of policy objective and JTF specific objective with justification

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
<p>1. A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity</p>	<p>Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027</p> <p>Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027</p>	<p>ERDF</p>	<p>Annex D of the Country Report Ireland 2019 identifies key priority investment areas for ERDF support under PO1 to effectively deliver on 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy. Investment is needed to enhance Research and Innovation capacities, enhance the competitiveness and growth of Irish-owned SMEs, strengthen innovation performance, prioritise smart specialisation areas, support clusters, and address regional differences in the research and development intensity. The Country Report Ireland 2020 states that relatively low levels of R&amp;D investment are a continuing concern.</p> <p>A key factor to ensuring sustainable economic development is the degree to which a region’s enterprise base can remain competitive and productive, with the 2019 and 2020 Country Specific Reports noting that differences in regional competitiveness in Ireland are sizeable and that significant productivity gaps remain between lagging domestic firms and highly productive multinational companies.</p> <p>Similarly, the independent Needs Analysis for ERDF and ESF+ in Ireland 2020 identified the need for investments to address the scale of regional disparities, measures to support an increase in R&amp;D expenditure, supports to increase collaboration between industry and the higher education sector and measures to promote Smart Regions/Innovation Districts.</p>

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			<p>The vision set out in Ireland’s Smart Specialisation Strategy (2022) [‘S3’] is to “embrace a regional approach to addressing Ireland’s Research, Development and Innovation (RD&amp;I) challenges” and to “provide a ‘bridge’ between regional and national innovation strategy building and decision making, bringing coherence to RD&amp;I planning for the benefit of enterprise and advancing the RD&amp;I agenda regionally and nationally”.</p> <p>The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) for the Eastern &amp; Midland Region (2019), the Southern Region (2020) and the Northern and Western Region (2020) each identify developing the region’s research and innovation capacity as a key strategic outcome. PO1 will address RSES policy objectives and problems within each region such as a lack of global supply chains and technology innovation spill over between MNCs, HEIs and SMEs, the lack of investment in public R&amp;I (including the need for proof-of-concept investments, regional innovation fora, SME investment and knowledge transfer), and the need for greater investment in higher education in the regions, in particular within the new Technological Universities.</p> <p>Each RSES emphasizes the importance of Smart Specialisation to the development of the region’s research, innovation, enterprise and human capital levels and to address regional disparities. Ireland’s new Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) supports this approach by incorporating regional level consultation including through revised Regional Enterprise Plans (REPs), which give a local and regional insight to innovation priorities.</p>

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			<p>The selection of PO1 responds to the RSES and to the S3, together with challenges and policy responses set out in Innovation 2020, the National Development Plan, the National Economic Recovery Plan, Enterprise 2025 Renewed, SME and Entrepreneurship Growth Plan, the National AI Strategy, Industry 4.0 Strategy, Our Rural Future, Science Foundation Ireland Strategy 2025 and the Regional Enterprise Plans. It will also support the implementation of Ireland’s new research and innovation strategy, the development of which is being led by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.</p> <p>Finally, the selection of PO1 for ERDF is mandatory to meet the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 CPR Article 4 Thematic concentration of ERDF support.</p>
<p>2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p>Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027</p> <p>Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027</p> <p>European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund - Programme for</p>	<p>ERDF EMFAF</p>	<p>The Country Report Ireland 2020 acknowledged that the publication of the Climate Action Plan 2019 represented “a much needed breakthrough and a stepping stone in the transition to a climate neutral and circular economy” but states that greenhouse emissions in the transport, building and agriculture sectors are high and on a rising trend.</p> <p>The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 recognises the scale of the challenge and increases the ambition to “support Ireland’s transition to Net Zero and achieve a climate neutral economy by no later</p>



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	Ireland (Seafood Development Programme 2021-2027)		<p>than 2050”. The Act provides the framework for Ireland to meet its international and EU climate commitments. Ireland is now on a legally binding path to net-Zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030, relative to 2018 levels. The Act provides for a system of carbon budgeting and requires that the first two five-year budgets, proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council, should equate to a total reduction of 51% over the period to 2030. It also provides that sectoral emissions ceilings are applied to different sectors across the economy. The Climate Action Plan 2021 highlights the role of European Structural Funds in supporting “a greener, low-carbon Europe including the potential for ERDF to support the new National Residential Retrofit Plan.</p> <p>The Needs Analysis for ERDF 2020 also identified the need to accelerate progress to address climate change objectives and the green economy. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) for each of Ireland’s three regions have climate action and the protection of the environment at their core. Each RSES states that improving energy efficiency is vital in order to reduce energy consumption while improving economic growth.</p> <p>EMFAF 2021-2027 will implement actions to support EMFAF Priorities including fostering sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources, processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products and strengthening international ocean governance and enabling seas and oceans to be safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed.</p>

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			<p>The Regional Sea Basin Analysis of the Western Waters identified multiple environmental challenges for Ireland to meet the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Investment is needed to ensure a sustainable management of fisheries &amp; aquaculture resources, implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, eliminate discards, address overcapacity, and enable climate change adaptation and mitigation. Investment is also needed to provide conditions for economically viable and sustainable fishing and aquaculture sectors, new and innovative technology for fisheries monitoring, and data reporting.</p> <p>The report of the Seafood Task force – Navigating Change (2021) identified the significant impacts of Brexit on the seafood sector and made wide ranging recommendations for support measures to help restructure the fleet and capital investment in the processing sector to mitigate lost raw material supply.</p> <p>Project Ireland 2040, identified a need for investment to support the sustainable growth and development of the maritime economy. The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 outlined actions required to restore the good environmental status of marine ecosystems.</p> <p>Food Vision 2030 identified 4 high level missions including climate smart, safe, and nutritious food. The EMFAF Programme 2021-2027 has outlined missions which are closely aligned to the missions outlined the Food Vision strategy and will implement actions under EMFAF Priorities</p>

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			<p>1,2 &amp; 4 which will support the 2030 vision for Irelands Agri-Food sector.</p> <p>Ireland’s draft National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development 2021-30 translates the Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030 into a strategic plan for Ireland’s aquaculture sector. The draft Plan identifies a range of investment needs in sustainability, competitiveness, innovation and climate resilience.</p>
<p>4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</p>	<p>ESF+ National Programme</p>	<p>ESF+</p>	<p>The 2019 CSRs recommended active integration support and upskilling, in particular for vulnerable groups and households with low work intensity. COVID-19 had a dramatic impact on the labour market. Ireland went from close to full employment to a monthly unemployment rate of over 30% in April 2020. While the labour market has rebounded quickly from the impact of COVID-19, challenges in relation to employment remain for certain groups. The new Pathways to Work Strategy focuses on helping people to return to employment, education and training while also supporting those most distant from the labour market. ESF+ will support access to employment for underrepresented groups in line with Pathways to Work and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities.</p> <p>Annex D of the 2019 Country Report noted that there is a need for more targeted skills specific training, as well as basic skills development and lifelong learning policies, including digital skills. The 2020 CSRs advise Ireland to support employment by developing skills. They also note the need to address the risk of digital divide. Indecon’s Needs Analysis highlights the importance of enhancement of skills</p>

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			<p>to address labour shortages and for Irish society more generally. Addressing the increased need for upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning is a priority for Ireland in line with the EU Skills Agenda the goals of the European Education Area 2030 and targets set in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. ESF+ will also support policies to ensure inclusive education including through implementation of the Adult Literacy for Life strategy and the National Access Plan for Higher Education.</p> <p>The Roadmap for Social Inclusion has set a target to reduce the national consistent poverty rate to 2% or less of the population and, to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive States in the EU.</p> <p>The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan seeks a reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The at risk of poverty and social exclusion rate stood at 20% nationally in 2020 (Eurostat). The North Western region had the highest rate at 25% while the Eastern and Midlands region had the lowest rate at 17%. There is also considerable variation within regions, with all regions experiencing pockets of poverty. Through programmes such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, ESF+ will provide tailored social inclusion supports at a local level in all regions, including rural and urban areas. While the share of the population in Ireland at risk of poverty or social exclusion has reduced in recent years, challenges remain for some groups, including migrants, members of the Traveller and Roma communities, persons with a disability, lone parents and individuals from jobless households. Ireland also faces a</p>

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			<p>challenge in relation to homelessness linked to shortages in housing supply.</p> <p>The 2020 Country Report noted that Child Poverty remains a concern with 1 in 4 children living in poverty. The National Reform Programme 2020 outlines efforts to address child poverty, which will be further developed in the context of the EU Child Guarantee. Annex D of the 2019 Country report noted that there is a continued need for food aid to the most deprived.</p>
<p>5. A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives</p>	<p>Southern Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027</p> <p>Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027</p>	<p>ERDF EMFAF</p>	<p>To ensure the harmonious development of urban areas as well as non-urban areas, the ERDF Regulation provides under policy objective 5 for support to be delivered in an integrated manner to the economic, social and environmental development of regions based on cross-sectoral territorial strategies using integrated territorial development tools. When developing urban areas, special attention is required to</p>

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	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund - Programme for Ireland (Seafood Development Programme 2021 - 2027)		<p>be paid to supporting functional urban areas due to their importance in triggering cooperation between local authorities and partners across administrative borders as well as strengthening urban-rural linkages. The need to address competitiveness and attractiveness of our urban centres was captured in the independent Needs Analysis for ERDF and ESF+</p> <p>Project Ireland 2040 is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the period 2021 to 2030, the National Development Plan (NDP), and the National Planning Framework (NPF). In line with the NPF and NDP, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) / Strategic Growth Centre Plans set a 12-year statutory strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development of Regions in pursuit of balanced regional development.</p> <p>Each RSES recognises the strategic role played by our urban settlements, building on Cities and Metropolitan Areas, Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns and our urban settlement networks as centres for population and employment growth to drive economic growth in the Regions. Regional Policy Objectives in each RSES support active land management and actions to address the principles of ‘Compact Growth’ and urban regeneration.</p> <p>PO5 will provide for a place-based, flexible, innovative and integrated response to addressing Sustainable Urban</p>

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			<p>Development, consistent with local and regional plans and with the national policy framework of Town Centre First. The place based approach contained in the RSES for each region will ensure that all parts of our regions will contribute to balanced regional development.</p> <p>Measures under PO5 can also support implementation of ‘Housing for All’ (HfA -2021). Pillar 4 targets measures to increase the use of existing under-utilised building stock to create new homes, this specifically references harnessing ERDF to address problems of dereliction and vacancy in our towns and provide measures to regenerate them into viable uses as part of the TCF policy.</p> <p>The EMFAF SDP 2021-2027 will implement actions to support enabling a sustainable blue economy in coastal, island and inland areas, and fostering the development of fishing and aquaculture communities.</p> <p>The Regional Sea Basin Analysis of the Western Waters identified multiple challenges for Ireland to meet the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy. Investment is needed to foster the local development of a sustainable blue economy in coastal areas through enhancing local partnerships, diversification, promoting economic, human, social and cultural assets, and improving environmental protection.</p> <p>The report of the Seafood Task force – Navigating Change (2021) identified the significant impacts of Brexit and the TCA on the seafood sector and coastal communities some recommendations for support, including investment through community led local development (FLAGs) in coastal communities to foster economic diversification, and grow</p>

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			<p>alternative employment opportunities, particularly for crew of decommissioned fishing vessels, through Blue Growth.</p> <p>Project Ireland 2040, outlined National Policy objectives, including supporting the sustainable growth and development of the maritime economy, particularly in remote rural coastal communities and islands. It identified the need for investment to support coastal communities in developing local strategies to strengthen their role in actions to grow their marine activities or diversify to other activities that will provide growth in these areas.</p>
<p>8. Enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union’s 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement</p>	<p>Just Transition Programme</p>	<p>JTF</p>	<p>The 2020 European Semester Report for Ireland identified the significant impact of the climate transition in the Midlands region, particularly among workers in the electricity-generating industry. The transition away from peat fueled electricity is well underway following the closure of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) stations in Shannonbridge and Lanesborough in 2020. The JTF may contribute to implementing the CSRs, through upskilling and re-skilling initiatives for workers affected by the transition, developing and supporting smart specialisation strategies, productive investments in SMEs and the creation of new firms, supporting investment in research, technology and innovation, supporting renewable energy activities, and other activities in the area of social inclusion</p> <p>The 2019 Climate Action Plan, as reflected in Ireland’s National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030, committed to delivering a just transition, recognising the significant level of change required and burdens borne must be addressed in a</p>



Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			<p>fair manner. It identified the need for a just transition for workers affected by the ending of peat harvesting for power generation in the Midlands region. The 2021 Climate Action Plan includes a just climate transition framework and just transition actions targeting the Midlands.</p> <p>There are a number of regional challenges. The Midlands region is predominantly rural and has a higher risk of poverty than the national average, a relatively high unemployment rate and the lowest Gross Value Added per person in the country. There are relatively low third level education completion rates, the region has the highest percentage of 15-24 year olds neither in employment nor in education and training (NEETs) in Ireland. There are high CO2 emissions per head from the power and industry sectors and the majority of F-G BER rated homes are concentrated in the Midlands and West (Source: EnvEcon 2021).</p> <p>Promotion of a just transition is supported by Ireland’s Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 which requires the Government to have regard to the requirement for a just transition to a climate neutral economy which endeavors, in so far as is practicable, to maximise employment opportunities, and support persons and communities that may be negatively affected by the transition</p> <p>Support towards transitioning to a low carbon economy is consistent with Project Ireland 2040, The National Planning Framework and National Development Plan 2021-2030. It will take into account regional strategies including the</p>

Selected objective	Programme	Fund	Justification for selection of a policy objective or JTF-specific objective
			Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 and the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024.

## 2. Policy choices, coordination and complementarity

Reference: points (b)(i), (ii) and (iii) of Article 11(1) CPR

A summary of the policy choices and the main results expected for each of the funds covered by the Partnership Agreement - point (b)(i) of Article 11(1) CPR

### **Policy Objective 1 – A more competitive and smarter Europe**

The findings from the Needs Analysis, the stakeholder consultation, along with the relevant EU, national and regional strategies including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for the Southern Region and Eastern Midlands Region and the Northern and Western Region have informed the identification of ERDF priorities. ERDF will contribute to the developing and enhancing of research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies as well as enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments. This will ensure enhanced capacity of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), especially Technological Universities (TUs), in Research and Development and Innovation.

It will enable strengthened links between academia, HEIs, TU/TIs and industry, underpinned by a place-based approach, considering specific regional strengths and weaknesses. It will also enable greater locally driven industry cooperation; enhanced value chain collaboration accelerated commercialization of research and improved innovation diffusion in the regions, in line with Smart Specialisation. Ensuring stronger regional innovation ecosystems that promote innovation diffusion, enterprise innovation and entrepreneurship

### **Policy Objective 2 – A greener low carbon Europe**

The findings from the Needs Analyses, stakeholder consultations, and policy reviews have informed the identification of priorities for both ERDF and EMFAF. These identified the need to accelerate progress to address climate change objectives and the green economy. ERDF will contribute to improved energy efficiency, lower greenhouse gas emissions and reduced risk of energy poverty arising from renovations to owner-occupied residential homes of lower income households. EMFAF will support increased energy efficiency and use of renewables across the seafood sector, and support innovation in technology and processes to reduce environmental impact while enhancing efficiency. EMFAF will also support measures to protect marine biodiversity and address marine litter. The EMFAF programme will support actions that will contribute to the objectives of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy. Some the actions to be implemented include, innovation in all seafood sectors, supporting coastal communities in developing skills and diversification into blue economy and increasing the knowledge and data of our marine environment

### **Policy Objective 4 – a more social and inclusive Europe**

The findings from the Needs Analysis and the stakeholder consultation, along with relevant EU, national and regional strategies inform the identification of a number of priorities. ESF+ will seek to improve access to employment for all and in particular, for groups who face greater challenges on the labour

market. The ESF+ Programme will seek to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and contribute to Ireland's progress on its national headline targets to be achieved by 2030 as outlined below.

ESF+ will contribute to the headline target of an employment rate of 78.2% by 2030 through labour market training, activation measures for all jobseekers with a focus on younger workers, and those underrepresented in the labour market.

ESF+ will contribute to the headline target of adult participation in learning of 64.2% by 2030, through measures to support upskilling and access to education. This will be done through an increased supply of flexible opportunities for continuous upskilling and reskilling in areas of high skill demand, including green and digital skills. ESF+ will also support upskilling of workers in the childcare sector, complementing national funding under the National Childcare Scheme to increase access to affordable, quality childcare. There will also be a focus on increasing basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills to ensure that all individuals have the capacity to fully engage in society.

ESF+ will support inclusive education, aiming to increase participation of disadvantaged groups and to increase capacity to meet the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds. ESF+ investments in education and training as outlined above will support Ireland in contributing to targets set under European Education Area 2030 through increasing participation in lifelong learning and improving quality and equity in education.

ESF+ will contribute to the headline target of an at risk of poverty and social exclusion rate of 16.7% by 2030 through a variety of social inclusion measures aimed at disadvantaged groups. ESF+ will aim to foster active inclusion and increase employment opportunities for those at higher risk of social exclusion. Targeted supports for disadvantaged groups will seek to build confidence and skills and thus increase employability. It is also necessary to support social integration through supports for vulnerable groups, including younger people and children. Food and basic material assistance will continue to be of importance for the most marginalised groups and will be delivered through local partner organisations to those most in need. ESF+ will also support social innovation and the development of new solutions to longstanding social challenges in areas identified as part of the ESF+ programme.

The CSR of 2020 highlighted Ireland's Social Housing Challenge. Legislative reforms have been introduced in the areas of social and affordable housing, including the Affordable Housing Act 2021 and the Land Development Agency Act 2021. These reforms will contribute to addressing the housing needs of the population into the medium term, which in turn will help to avoid housing acting as a constraint on the labour force.

### **Policy Objective 5 - a Europe closer to citizens**

The findings from the Needs Analysis and the stakeholder consultation, along with relevant EU, national and regional strategies inform the identification of priorities for both ERDF and EMFAF.

ERDF will contribute to fostering integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism, and security in urban areas. This will be achieved via integrated urban regeneration action plans using a Town Centre First Health Check framework to gather data and lead actions on regeneration also through pilot and pathfinder projects tackling town centre regeneration, place-making, vacancy and

dereliction. These supported actions will be targeted towards key towns and regional growth centres in the two NUT2 regions in the programme area. Integrated territorial strategies will be used under this specific objective. These will take the form of "territorial tool supporting initiatives designed by the Member State" pursuant to point (c) of Article 28 CPR.

EMFAF will enable a sustainable blue economy in coastal areas, and fostering the development of fishing and aquaculture communities through a Community Led Local Development via Fisheries Local Action Groups. This will ensure a climate-smart, environmentally sustainable coastal economy, enabling innovation driven by technology and talent in coastal communities.

### **JTF**

The JTF Specific Objective, enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union's 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement. Ireland considers that several of the proposed operations will support the achievement of the objectives of the European Green Deal. The findings from the Structural Reform Support Programme EnvEcon analysis, along with relevant EU, national and regional strategies inform the identification of development needs in the wider Midlands and potential actions contributing to results which could be supported by the EUJTF. The EUJTF may support the modernisation of the business environment and create employment opportunities particularly in renewable energy and low carbon sectors by expanding entrepreneurship supports for enterprise development. Building on strengths in the EUJTF, territory including energy production, engineering, advanced manufacturing, food and beverages, life sciences, biodiversity and tourism.

The EUJTF may also contribute to the enhancement of the skills profile through training opportunities to support wider climate action objectives in line with development needs of the region.

EUJTF may also consider the promoting of environmental sustainability. This would enhance economic and employment opportunities from natural and industrial heritage endowments along with leveraging tourism, culture and heritage. The thematic scope of the JTF intervention will be decided in the context of the territorial just transition plan.

Coordination, demarcation and complementarities between the Funds and, where appropriate, coordination between national and regional programmes - point (b)(ii) of Article 11(1) CPR

The basis for coordination between the Cohesion Funds is provided for in the Common Provisions Regulation, ensuring consistency and alignment between the funds. This includes a framework for close coordination to ensure that co-financed interventions create synergies and streamline implementation.

Mutual representation on the respective programme monitoring committees for each of the shared management funds will continue for the 2021-2027 period.

### **National Partnership Structures**

It is intended to maintain the existing structures while taking account of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP).

The key components will be:

- Partnership Process Steering Group (PPSG)
- Partnership Agreement Monitoring Committee (PAMC)
- Partnership Agreement Working Group (PAWG)
- Programme Monitoring Committees

### **Partnership Process Steering Group (PPSG)**

In accordance with CPR Article 8 Partnership and multi-level governance, Ireland has put in place suitable mechanisms that will ensure coordination between the funds and other EU and national instruments. At the National level, a Partnership Process Steering Group (PPSG) of the Funds was established to assist and advise the programme authorities throughout the development process for the Partnership Agreement, including identifying synergies and common themes across programmes.

The PPSG includes representatives from economic and social partners; relevant bodies representing civil society; environmental partners; non-governmental organisations; bodies promoting social inclusion; fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination and accountable departments.

### **Partnership Agreement Monitoring Committee (PAMC)**

The PPSG will be transformed into the PAMC once the Partnership Agreement has been submitted to the Commission. This group will oversee the implementation of the Partnership Agreement. It will assist and advise the fund programme authorities and to put in place, where necessary, appropriate systems to address cooperation, complementarity, subsidiarity and implementation issues between the funds programmes and between these programmes and other Union instruments. DPER, as Member State, will chair the PAMC and the EU Commission will be represented on the PAMC in an advisory capacity. Its membership will be also set up in line with CPR article 8. Gender balance will, as far as possible, be actively encouraged on all Monitoring Committees. It is the intention of the Irish Authorities to develop a network of Fund Managers of both Cohesion Funds and other Union Instruments to co-operate on areas of complementarity and synergies throughout the programming period. This group will report into the PAMC as appropriate.

### **Partnership Agreement Working Group (PAWG)**

The PAWG reports into the PPSG as appropriate. Membership is comprised of the relevant programme authorities of the CPR Funds. The role of the PAWG is to assist in drafting and coordination of timelines of the various funds for the purposes of the Partnership Agreement. The group has been instrumental in the common approach taken for the Horizontal Principles along with identifying and exploring possible synergies and complementarities across the funds along with other EU instruments. One recommendation made in the Complementarities workshop in December 2021 was to repurpose the PAWG into a ‘Practitioners’ Network’ during the implementation phase. This network could examine some of the practical challenges faced by managing bodies in developing complementarities between actions as well as developing solutions for the ground up. This network could also facilitate peer to peer learning between programme managers. This network would report into the PAMC.

### **Programme Monitoring Committees**

Article 38 of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) requires Member States to set up a Monitoring Committee for each Programme within three months of the date of notification by the European Commission to the Member State of the decision adopting a programme. A separate Monitoring Committee will be established for each programme with the exact membership of the monitoring committees being finalised when the draft programmes are finalised.

Each Monitoring Committee will meet at least once a year and review progress in the implementation of the programme and progress towards achieving its objectives. Monitoring Committees will examine all issues that affect the performance of the programme and will be consulted, and issue an opinion on, any amendment of the programme proposed by the Managing Authority.

The Monitoring Committee may make recommendations to the Managing Authorities, including on measures to reduce the administrative burden to beneficiaries. In addition, the Managing Authorities will seek to ensure complementarity with other funds to maximise the visibility and return from the available funding.

To ensure complementarity across the Funds, each CPR Programme Managing Authority will be represented on the monitoring committees of the other Programmes. In addition, the Managing Authorities for each Programme will also be represented at national level on the Partnership Agreement Monitoring Committee.

Membership of the Monitoring Committee for each Programme will be in line with the requirements of the CPR.

### **Horizontal Principles**

Under the Partnership Agreement, the funds have committed to a common approach in fulfilling the Horizontal Enabling Conditions. Ireland is committed to ensuring respect for fundamental rights and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the implementation of the Funds. Our partners from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) who assisted in agreeing a common approach to the horizontal enabling conditions on the effective application and implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU CFR) and the implementation and application of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) have developed guidance which aims to support authorities in advancing of equality and human rights in the planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluations of their programmes (<https://eufunds.ie/regulations-guidance>).

Appropriate steps will be taken to prevent any discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programmes.

The European Green Deal has set an ambitious goal of transforming EU economy towards a sustainable future, and sets the framework to formulate pathways to achieve a climate-neutral and circular economy at the latest by 2050. In this context, Ireland commits to use the Funds under the Partnership Agreement ensuring that initiatives under the European Green Deal are supported. Moreover, Ireland will use the Funds to mobilise research and foster innovation in the sustainability area. Finally, Ireland commits to take into account the Do No Significant Harm principle in its investments under all Policy Objectives. Considering that the European Green Deal highlights that its targets can be achieved only whilst leaving no one behind and in a fair and inclusive way, Ireland will support those most vulnerable and the most exposed to the social and economic impacts of the transition, for example by reskilling and upskilling.

### **New European Bauhaus**

Where appropriate, cohesion policy programmes will support investments that successfully combine the principles of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusiveness of the New European Bauhaus initiative with a view to finding affordable, inclusive, sustainable and attractive solutions to climate challenges.

### **Biodiversity**

The Irish Government are currently drafting Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. Stakeholders across Government are working collaboratively to commit to actions to reverse the trends of biodiversity loss and align with the ambition of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

The Irish Authorities have launched or expect to launch a number of initiatives that will work towards reaching the EU Biodiversity Strategy ambitions over the next decade such as:



- The Ag Climatise roadmap which sets an ambitious vision for a ‘climate neutral agriculture sector by 2050’
- The new National Soil Sampling Programme being launched this year, which will help gain a greater understanding of our soils at farm level.
- The launch of the pilot National Pollinator Monitoring Scheme in July 2021, Ireland is one of the first countries to do so following the EU Pollinator Initiative
- The Irish Government has seed-funded a Business & Biodiversity Platform to promote and support measurable, certifiable actions on biodiversity within the private sector
- A Peatland Finance Ireland initiative, funded by the EIB and the Irish Government is working towards developing a roadmap for restoration of Irish peatland landscapes
- An advisory group has been convened to provide independent expert advice and recommendations on the processes required and the challenges to be addressed in expanding Ireland’s Marine Protected Area network.

For the 2021 – 2027 period investments in biodiversity will happen via a number of Ireland’s EU programmes including Peace Plus, EMFAF, CAP, NRRP, JTF and EU Life. For example, a number of pilot restoration programmes are being undertaken through the EU LIFE mechanism and our Peace Plus programme will invest in three investment areas supporting biodiversity measures to include:

- Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience
- Marine and Coastal Management
- Water Quality and Catchment Management

### **Complementarities**

Ireland is keen to ensure consistency at programming and implementation stages between interventions supported by the Funds and the objectives of other Union policies. The Irish Authorities will also seek to identify and exploit complementarities between different Union instruments and to maximise the impact of scarce Cohesion Funding.

To that end in April 2021, a one-day workshop was held with both the Cohesion Funds and other EU Instruments in Ireland examining complementarities and synergies. Building on the momentum, DPER facilitated a number of bilateral meetings across funds in November 2021 and a further workshop took place in December 2021 to explore the complementarities and synergies across EU Programmes in Ireland and explore possible delivery mechanisms for these potential complementarities and synergies for the new programming period.

Complementarities were a standing item on the Partnership Process Steering Group agenda, and regular bilateral meetings are occurring between the various EU Funds. A further recommendation was to consider setting up a ‘Practitioners’ Network’ to examine cross cutting issues and facilitate peer to peer learning. Furthermore, Fund Managers have committed to enhanced cooperation in areas of common interest, such as on communications and simplified cost options. A number of specific areas were identified which cut across most of the funds such as:

- Skills training and development- especially in the areas of green and digital skills needs
- Digital Skills – Following Country Specific Recommendations in areas of Hub development, overall Digital skills training,
- Green skills training including around retrofitting for investments in homes, buildings, community facilities etc.
- Smart villages and towns-development of coherent strategies especially in the areas of innovation, digitalisation, low carbon development, energy efficiency and sustainable economic development
- Structures to avoid double funding by building the requirement into the application process, cross representation on approval boards, enhanced use of IT systems and greater collaboration at IB level

### **Communications and Visibility**

Ensuring strong coordination, better alignment and improved integration at national level of the combined communication activities across all Cohesion Policy Fund programmes and maximising cooperation with the visibility activities of other EU funds including INTERREG is a key strategic objective to be addressed in the period ahead. Ireland will appoint a single national coordinator with responsibility for coordinating communications across the Cohesion Policy fund programmes, liaising with other EU programmes and representing the Member State on the Commission’s INFORM network.

Communication efforts will target a wide range of audiences with key messages that are relevant & tailored to them and their needs. There will be a particular focus on the citizens in the programme areas, highlighting the positive contribution of EU funding to their lives by increasing the visibility of results of the operations – using traditional and social media and participation in relevant events and activities.

The coordinator will establish a national communication network involving the communication officers of each programme, the European Commission Representations and European Parliament Liaison Office, the Europe Direct Information Centres, relevant networks, educational and research institutions and other relevant partners and bodies. This network will meet regularly at least four times a year.

The coordinator will also be responsible for oversight and updating of the single website portal <https://eufunds.ie/> to ensure the visibility of support in all activities relating to operations supported by the Funds including operations of strategic importance and communication to Union citizens of the role and achievements of the Funds.

**ERDF and ESF+**

The Needs Analysis carried out by Indecon for ERDF /ESF+ along with the complementarity workshops have identified strong complementarities between particular areas of ERDF and ESF+ funds. These include areas such as measures to increase R&D expenditures, supports for collaboration between industry and the higher education sector, promotion of the Smart Region, measures to progress climate change transition, labour market and sectoral initiatives to respond to the impact of Covid-19, initiatives to address access to employment for underrepresented groups, programmes to enhance skills and lifelong learning, supports to improve the quality and affordability of childcare and measures to tackle poverty and promote social inclusion.

There are strong areas of complementarity between ESF+ and ERDF in funding measures to support the transition to a climate neutral economy. Addressing the challenge of climate change will require integrated measures including enhancing the energy efficiency of the economy. For example, investment programmes to retrofit Ireland's building stock to enhance energy efficiency and reduce energy poverty will be supported by ERDF. Ensuring that the labour market has the skills required for green transition, including retrofitting programmes, is likely to require upskilling and training which could be supported by ESF+.

Addressing the wider educational and training requirements of the economy including measures to enhance digital skills also represent potential areas of complementarity between the two Cohesion Funds. For example, ERDF could support infrastructure required for Smart Specialisation, R&D investment, and measures to enhance digital infrastructure. Such measures would require complimentary training and education supports which could be funded by ESF+. There is also likely to be scope for ERDF and ESF+ to both support urban and rural regeneration initiatives for example there is potential for Local Authorities to explore social inclusion aspects to any ERDF urban regeneration initiatives.

### **EMFAF**

It is envisaged that support under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) will focus on the sustainable use of resources, as well as a shift towards a low-carbon economy. In addition, the fund will have measures preserving marine biodiversity and acquiring marine knowledge. There is also a move towards more local-led development of fisheries and aquaculture areas. There may be some opportunities for complementarities between EMFAF, ERDF and ESF+. These could include measures to enhance R&D in the marine sector as well as funding to enhance SME productivity, which could benefit marine processing SMEs. ERDF and ESF+ funding will also be important in contributing to the economic and social development of coastal communities in Ireland.

### **Just Transition Fund (JTF)**

The European Green Deal aims to transform the EU into a resource efficient and competitive economy that is climate neutral by 2050. The Just Transition mechanism has been introduced to provide support to the regions and sectors most affected by the green transition and will provide targeted supports to the regions and people affected to mitigate against the socio-economic impacts of the climate change mitigation measures. The thematic scope of the JTF intervention will be decided in the context of the territorial Just Transition Plan. Annex D of the 2020 Country Report for Ireland sets out the potential areas that the JTF could target including training, SME's, research and innovation, green technology and the circular economy and is aligned with the policy objectives for both ERDF and ESF+. Complementarity will be particularly important in the Midlands Region of Ireland. This region will be particularly

impacted economically and socially by the deindustrialisation of peat harvesting for energy and heating. The potential for complementarities may include the creation of new employment opportunities and upskilling of workers.

Complementarities and synergies between the funds covered by the Partnership Agreement, the AMIF, the ISF, the BMVI, and other Union instruments - point (b)(iii) of Article 11(1) CPR

### **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)**

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund promotes the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration. The groups targeted under AMIF are, third country nationals, refugees and eligible asylum seekers. The focus of the AMIF is the reception and early integration of asylum seekers and this includes basic language training. There is potential complementarities with ESF+ which will provide training and enhance skills with a greater focus on the labour market.

### **Internal Security Fund (ISF)**

The focus of the ISF is to increase the exchange of information among Member States' law enforcement and other relevant bodies (worldwide). To intensify cross-border joint operations in relation to serious and organised crime with a cross-border dimension; and strengthening the capabilities in relation to combatting and preventing crime including terrorism in particular through increased cooperation.

There is potential complementarities with AMIF on engagement measures such as an anti-radicalisation programme along with potential for synergies with Horizon 2020 funding, various calls for proposals and other direct grants.

### **Peace Plus**

PEACE PLUS is a EU cross-border programme that will contribute to a more prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The programme will achieve this by funding activities that promote peace and reconciliation and contribute to the cross-border economic and territorial development of the region. There is potential for complementarities with both ERDF and ESF+, through the development of smart cities and towns, digitisation, SME support, climate mitigation measures, skills development, research and innovation.

### **LIFE**

The CPR Managing Authorities will seek opportunities for complementarities with the EU Life Programmes which have many complementarities with the Green Climate objectives of the CPR Funds.

### **European Territorial Cooperation (ETCs)**

The ETC programmes Ireland is participating in have many cross cutting themes with Cohesion Policy Funds including on greener Climate objectives and linkages to its Smart Specialisation strategy.

### **Recovery & Resilience Facility (RRF)**

An EU programme providing member states, with financial support to step up public investments and reforms in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. The RRF will help member states address the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic whilst ensuring that their economies undertake the green and digital transitions, becoming more sustainable and resilient. There are strong areas of complementarity between ESF+, ERDF particularly in investment programmes to retrofit Ireland's building stock to enhance energy efficiency and reduce energy poverty. There are potential areas of complementarities with ERDF and JTF in accelerating and expanding digital reforms and transformation through R&I aligned with Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy. ESF+ will build on and develop the immediate pandemic skills recovery programme funded under RRF in 2021 and 2022 with a focus on future skills and relevant priority groups, commencing upon completion of the RRF investment.

### **Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR)**

An EU programme to help Ireland's economy in mitigating the impact of Brexit, through support to regions and economic sectors, including job creation and protection, such as short-time work schemes, re-skilling, and training. Cross cutting measures have been identified across the Cohesion funds, particularly EMFAF and BAR, such as enterprise supports; measures to support fisheries and coastal communities; targeted supports for the agri-food sector; reskilling and retraining.

### **Horizon Europe**

Horizon Europe, the EU's funding programme for research and innovation, facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing and supporting policies while tackling global challenges. Horizon Europe has introduced 'Missions' as an entirely new instrument. Missions address global challenges and, employ a portfolio of instruments across diverse disciplines and policy areas. A number of these missions have potential complementarity with the funds such as ERDF (e.g. Investments in research capacity; and adaption to climate change) and EMFAF particularly on adaption to climate change, including societal transformation; climate neutral and smart cities; healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters, while direct investment is not envisaged, agencies may link in with Horizon. For example under ERDF, projects which receive the Horizon "Seal of Excellence" would not have to pass another application and selection process if it were consistent with the programme's smart specialisation strategy.

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and EAFRD**

Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) for the period 2023-2027 will underpin the sustainable development of Ireland's farming and food sector by supporting viable farm incomes and enhancing competitiveness, by strengthening the socio-economic fabric of rural areas, and by contributing to the achievement of environmental and climate objectives at national and EU levels. Ireland's CSP is aimed at supporting the economic, environmental and social sustainability of rural areas, and there is a particularly strong emphasis on the achievement of a higher level of climate and environment ambition.

There are potential across the Cohesion Funds with CAP through industry and the higher education sector, promotion of the Smart Region, measures to progress climate change transition, labour market and sectoral initiatives to respond to the impact of Covid-19, initiatives to address access to employment for underrepresented groups, programmes to enhance skills and lifelong learning, and measures to promote social inclusion.

## **LEADER**

Ireland's Leader Programme has helped rural communities across the country to actively engage and to direct the local development of their area, through community-led local development, promoting employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry.

There is scope for complementarities across the Cohesion and other EU Instruments, particularly with ESF+ promoting gender equality and social inclusion. There is also potential for complementarities with ERDF and JTF through the development of smart cities and towns, digitisation, SME support, climate mitigation measures, skills development, research and innovation and with EMFAF on locally led initiatives.

## **Erasmus +**

This is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sports. The aim of the programmes is to reduce unemployment particularly amongst young people, promoting adult learning specifically for new skills relevant to the labour market, supporting innovation and reducing early school leaving. In particular, there is scope for synergies with ESF+ given the shared focus on education youth, inclusion and digitalisation. This could include practical collaboration in relation to communications and outreach or the consideration of use of the Seal of Excellence approach, where relevant.

### 3. Contribution to the budgetary guarantee under InvestEU with justification<sup>1</sup>

Reference: point (g) of Article 11(1) and Article 14 CPR

Table 2A: Contribution to InvestEU (breakdown by year)

Contribution from		Contribution to	Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	InvestEU window(s)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

<sup>1</sup>Contributions shall not affect the annual breakdown of financial appropriations at the MFF level for a Member State

Table 2B: Contribution to InvestEU (summary)

Fund	Category of region	Sustainable Infrastructure (a)	Research, Innovation and Digitisation (b)	SME (c)	Social Investment and Skills (d)	Total (f)=(a)+(b)+(c)+(d)
Total						

Justification, taking into account how those amounts contribute to the achievement of policy objectives selected in the Partnership Agreement in line with Article 10(1) of the InvestEU Regulation

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#### 4. Transfers<sup>1</sup>

MS requests a	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transfer between categories of region
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer to instruments under direct or indirect management
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer between ERDF, ESF+, Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer of ERDF and ESF+ resources as complementary support to the JTF
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfers from European territorial cooperation to Investment for jobs and growth

<sup>1</sup>Transfers shall not affect the annual breakdown of financial appropriations at the MFF level for a Member State

#### 4.1. Transfers between categories of region

Reference: point (e) of Article 11(1) and Article 111 CPR

Table 3A: Transfers between categories of region (breakdown by year)

Transfer from	Transfer to	Breakdown by year							
Category of region	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
More developed	Transition		4,000,000.00	4,000,000.00	4,000,000.00	4,000,000.00	4,000,000.00	0.00	20,000,000.00

Table 3B: Transfer between categories of region (summary)

Category of region	Allocation by category of region	Transfer to	Transfer amount	Share of the initial allocation transferred	Allocation by category of region after the transfer
More developed	652,233,038.00	Transition	20,000,000.00	3.07%	632,233,038.00
Transition	251,863,007.00				271,863,007.00

#### Justification

The European Commission has downgraded the Northern and Western Region from its previous status as a “More Developed Region” to a “Transition Region” for the funding period of 2021 to 2027. It is the only region in Ireland to be classified as such. This was due to the fact the region’s GDP per head of population averaged at 82% of the EU 27 average during the Commission’s latest evaluation period (2015-2017). More up to date data released by Eurostat (February 2022) has shown the region’s GDP per head of population performance relative to the EU27 average continued to decline up to the end of 2020, to the point where the region’s GDP per head of population was estimated to be 71% of the EU average.

The European Commission’s *2019 and 2020 Semester Country Report – Ireland*, stated that regional disparities in Ireland are amongst the highest in the EU and are increasing. If these trends remain unchecked, it will have a damaging impact on the economic and social wellbeing of all regions in Ireland, particularly rurally orientated regions such as the Northern and Western Region. The Needs Analysis for Ireland’s ERDF programmes also found that there were significant differences in regional performance in Ireland and stated that there was a clear need for more balanced regional development.

Additionally the European Parliament’s Committee on Regional Development categorised the Northern and Western Region as a “Lagging Region” facing specific development challenges across a range of areas, including relatively lower productivity and educational attainment, as well as a weaker skills base and business environment.

According to the 2019 European Regional Competitiveness Index, the Northern and Western Region is ranked as the 177th most competitive region in the EU. This is due to lower than average results in terms of infrastructure, market size and efficiency. In this regard, its peer regions include Nord-Pas de Calais, Bourgogne, Umbria, Sachsen-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The region records a similar performance across a host of competitiveness indicators including infrastructure, innovation, education, and technological readiness but underperforms relative to its peer regions with respect to labour market efficiency and market size.

The European Commission released the 2021 “Regional Innovation Scoreboard ” which assesses the innovation performance of regions across Europe, providing a comparative assessment of the performance of innovation systems across 240 regions in the EU. As per the latest results, the Northern and Western Region is now the only region in Ireland to be considered a “Moderate Innovator” which is a region to record a regional innovation index score of between 70 and 100 per cent of the EU average. Although the region’s overall innovation index score has improved since 2014, the Northern and Western Region continues to record notable weaknesses relative to the EU average in 2021 in terms of: R&D expenditure in the private and public sectors; Employed ICT specialists; Employment in knowledge intensive activities; Patent applications; Trademark applications and Design applications.

The Irish Authorities, including the Southern Assembly and the Eastern and Midland Assembly, have agreed to transfer €20 million from the more developed regions (Southern , Eastern and Midlands - SEM) ERDF programme to the Northern and Western Regional Programme, the region in transition under the ERDF programme in this Member State. Based on engagement and analysis undertaken in the programming process, this is viewed as an allocation that can be absorbed in the Northern Western region.

#### 4. Transfers

##### 4.2. Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management

Reference: Article 26(1) CPR

Table 4A: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management where such possibility is provided for in the basic act\* (breakdown by year)

Transfer from		Transfer to	Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	Instrument	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

\* Transfers may be made to any other instruments under direct or indirect management; where such possibility is provided for in the basic act. Number and names of the relevant Union instruments will be specified accordingly

Table 4B: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management where such possibility is provided for in the basic act\* (summary)

Fund	Category of region	Total
Total		

\* Transfers may be made to any other instruments under direct or indirect management; where such possibility is provided for in the basic act. Number and names of the relevant Union instruments will be specified accordingly

#### Justification

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### 4.3. Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds

Reference: Article 26(1) CPR

Table 5A: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund and to other Fund or Funds\* (breakdown by year)

Transfers from		Transfers to		Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

\* Transfers between ERDF and ESF+ can only be done within the same category of region

Table 5B: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds (summary)

Transfer from		Transfer to											
Fund	Category of region	ERDF			ESF+			CF	EMFAF	AMIF	ISF	BMVI	Total
		More developed	Transition	Less developed	More developed	Transition	Less developed						
Total													0.00

\* Transfer to other programmes. Transfers between ERDF and ESF+ can only be done within the same category of region.

Justification

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4. Transfers

4.4. Transfer of ERDF and ESF+ resources as complementary support to the JTF, with justification<sup>1</sup>

Reference: Article 27 CPR

Table 6A: Transfer of ERDF and ESF+ resources as complementary support to the JTF (breakdown by year)

Fund	Category of region	Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
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\* JTF resources should be complemented with ERDF or ESF+ resources of the category of region where the territory concerned is located

<sup>1</sup>This transfer is preliminary. It should be confirmed or corrected at the first adoption of programme(s) with JTF allocation as indicated in Annex V

Table 6B: Transfer of ERDF and ESF+ resources as complementary support to the JTF (summary)

Article 3 JTF Regulation allocation prior to transfers:

Transfer (complementary support) per category of region from	Transfers to JTF to the territory located in
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\* JTF resources should be complemented with ERDF or ESF+ resources of the category of regions where the territory concerned is located

Justification

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4.5. Transfers from European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) to Investment for jobs and growth goal

Reference: Article 111(3) CPR

Table 7: Transfers from European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) to Investment for jobs and growth goal

Transfer from European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg)								
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

Transfer to Investment for jobs and growth goal									
Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

Justification

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5. The form of Union contribution for technical assistance

Reference: point (f) of Article 11(1) CPR

The choice of the form of Union contribution to technical assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(4)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5)



## Justification

With agreement from the Irish Authorities via our Partnership Working Group, the Member State will implement technical assistance through a flat rate. The application of a flat rate is in order to reduce the administrative burden and is in line with the Commissions simplification measures for the 2021 – 2027 period. Following on from the 2014 – 2020 period, technical assistance will continue to assist the Member State and Managing Authorities with the preparatory, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of the Programmes. It will also enable capacity building of relevant partners.

Experience gained from previous programming rounds has been taken into account in this decision. Lessons learnt have fed into the identification of the requirement for Irish Authorities to utilise Technical Assistance to a greater extent, such as capacity building for relevant partners as well as to provide financing for carrying out functions such as preparation, training, management, monitoring, evaluation, visibility and communication and where necessary the procurement of relevant expertise, to ensure the effective administration and use of the Funds.

## 6. Thematic concentration

### 6.1 ERDF/CF

Reference: Article 4(3) ERDF and CF Regulation

Member State decides to	<input type="checkbox"/> comply with thematic concentration at national level
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> comply with thematic concentration at category of region level

## 6.2 ESF+

Reference: point (c) of Article 11(1) CPR and Article 7 ESF+ Regulation

Member State complies with thematic concentration requirements	for	Planned ESF+ programmes
Social inclusion, programmed under specific objectives (h) – (l) of Article 4 ESF+ Regulation	50.50%	
Support to the most deprived, programmed under specific objectives (m), and in duly justified cases (l) of Article 4 ESF+ Regulation	6.30%	
Support to youth employment, programmed under specific objectives (a), (f) and (l) of Article 4 ESF+ Regulation	3.30%	
Support to tackling child poverty, programmed under specific objectives (f), (h) – (l) of Article 4 ESF+ Regulation	12.00%	
Capacity building social partners and NGO's, programmed under all specific objectives except (m) of Article 4 ESF+ Regulation	0.00%	

7. Preliminary financial allocation from each fund covered by the Partnership Agreement, by policy objective, JTF specific objective and Technical Assistance, at national and where appropriate regional level

Table 8: Preliminary financial allocation from ERDF, Cohesion Fund, JTF, ESF+, EMFAF by policy objective, JTF specific objective and Technical Assistance\*

Reference: point (c) of Article 11(1) CPR

Policy Objectives, JTF specific objectives or technical assistance	ERDF			CF allocation at national level	JTF**			ESF+			EMFAF allocation at national level	Total
	Allocation at national level	Category of region	Allocation by category of region		Allocation at national level	Article 3 JTF resources	Article 4 JTF resources	Allocation at national level	Category of region	Allocation by category of region		
1. Smarter Europe	200,042,695.00	More developed	134,677,692.00									200,042,695.00
		Transition	65,365,003.00									
2. Greener Europe	118,714,815.00	More developed	79,643,250.00								125,310,899.00	244,025,714.00
		Transition	39,071,565.00									
4. Social Europe		More developed						479,603,802.00	More developed	345,995,810.00		479,603,802.00
		Transition							Transition	133,607,992.00		
5. Europe closer to citizens	54,559,495.00	More developed	36,129,515.00								9,000,000.00	63,559,495.00
		Transition	18,429,980.00									
8. JTF specific objective					81,217,977.00	35,563,217.00	45,654,760.00					81,217,977.00
TA36(5). Technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR	22,399,016.00	More developed	15,027,025.00		3,248,717.00	1,422,527.00	1,826,190.00	28,776,222.00	More developed	20,759,746.00	8,058,653.00	62,482,608.00
		Transition	7,371,991.00						Transition	8,016,476.00		
TA37. Technical assistance pursuant to Article 37 CPR		More developed							More developed			
		Transition							Transition			
Total	395,716,021.00	More developed	<b>265,477,482.00</b>		84,466,694.00	36,985,744.00	47,480,950.00	508,380,024.00	More developed	<b>366,755,556.00</b>	142,369,552.00	1,130,932,291.00
		Transition	<b>130,238,539.00</b>						Transition	<b>141,624,468.00</b>		

Policy Objectives, JTF specific objectives or technical assistance	ERDF			CF allocation at national level	JTF**			ESF+			EMFAF allocation at national level	Total
	Allocation at national level	Category of region	Allocation by category of region		Allocation at national level	Article 3 JTF resources	Article 4 JTF resources	Allocation at national level	Category of region	Allocation by category of region		
JTF73. Article 7 JTF resources related to Article 3 JTF resources												
JTF74. Article 7 JTF resources related to Article 4 JTF resources												
Grand total	395,716,021.00		<b>395,716,021.00</b>		84,466,694.00	36,985,744.00	47,480,950.00	508,380,024.00		<b>508,380,024.00</b>	142,369,552.00	1,130,932,291.00

\* The amount should include the flexibility amounts in accordance with Article 18 CPR that have been preliminary allocated. The actual allocation of the flexibility amounts will only be confirmed at the mid-term review.

\*\* JTF amounts after the envisaged complementary support from the ERDF and ESF+

## Justification

Other than the transfer between regions under ERDF as set out under section 4 of this Partnership Agreement, the preliminary financial allocations from each of the funds covered by the Partnership Agreement respecting Fund-specific rules on thematic concentration and the preliminary financial allocation for the specific objective of the JTF are as set out by the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) or NextGenerationEU (NGEU) allocations as appropriate.

8. List of planned programmes under the funds covered by the Partnership Agreement with the respective preliminary financial allocations by fund and the corresponding contribution by category of region.

Table 9B: List of planned programmes<sup>1</sup> with preliminary financial allocations\*

Reference: point (h) of Article 11(1) and Article 110 CPR

Title**	Fund	Category of region	Union contribution		National contribution	Total
			Union contribution without TA pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR	Union contribution for TA pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR		
2021IE05SFPR001 - EIST (Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training) Programme	ESF+	More developed	345,995,810.00	20,759,746.00	484,926,904.00	851,682,460.00
2021IE05SFPR001 - EIST (Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training) Programme	ESF+	Transition	133,607,992.00	8,016,476.00	87,703,068.00	229,327,536.00
2021IE16JTFR001 - Just Transition Fund 2021-2027	Article 3 JTF resources		35,563,217.00	1,422,527.00	36,985,744.00	73,971,488.00
2021IE16JTFR001 - Just Transition Fund 2021-2027	Article 4 JTF resources		45,654,760.00	1,826,190.00	47,480,950.00	94,961,900.00
2021IE16RFPR001 - Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027	ERDF	More developed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2021IE16RFPR001 - Northern and Western Regional Programme 2021-2027	ERDF	Transition	122,866,548.00	7,371,991.00	86,825,693.00	217,064,232.00
2021IE16RFPR002 - Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027	ERDF	More developed	250,450,457.00	15,027,025.00	398,216,227.00	663,693,709.00
2021IE16RFPR002 - Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027	ERDF	Transition	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	ERDF,CF,ESF+,JTF		934,138,784.00	54,423,955.00	1,142,138,586.00	2,130,701,325.00
2021IE14MFPR001 - European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund - Programme for Ireland	EMFAF		134,310,899.00	8,058,653.00	116,000,000.00	258,369,552.00
Total	All funds		1,068,449,683.00	62,482,608.00	1,258,138,586.00	2,389,070,877.00

<sup>1</sup>In case Article 36(5) CPR technical assistance was chosen

\* The amount should include the flexibility amounts in accordance with Article 18 CPR that have been preliminary allocated. The actual allocation of the flexibility amounts will only be confirmed at the mid-term review.

\*\* Programmes may have joint support from the Funds in line with Article 25(1) CPR (as priorities may use support from one or more Funds in line with Article 22(2) CPR). Whenever the JTF contributes to a programme, the JTF allocation needs to include complementary transfers and be split to present amounts in accordance with Articles 3 and 4 JTF Regulation.



8. List of planned programmes under the funds covered by the Partnership Agreement with the respective preliminary financial allocations by fund and the corresponding contribution by category of region.

Table 10: List of planned Interreg programmes

Reference: Article 11 CPR

CCI	Title
2021TC16FFTN005	(Interreg VI-B) Northern Periphery and Arctic
2021TC16RFPC001	PEACE PLUS Ireland-Northern Ireland/United Kingdom
2021TC16RFTN002	(Interreg VI-B) Atlantic Area
2021TC16RFTN005	(Interreg VI-B) North West Europe

## 9. A summary of actions planned to reinforce administrative capacity of the implementation of the funds covered by the Partnership Agreement

Reference: point (i) of Article 11(1) CPR

### **Experience**

The Irish Authorities involved in the delivery of the Programmes for 2021 - 2027 have built up significant experience from previous programming periods and are familiar with the regulations governing the implementation of the Programmes in the new round. Capacities will need to be built up in the management of the JTF. Representatives from both the Member State and the Managing Authorities of the Funds have, and will continue to participate in EU seminars and workshops in order to remain fully briefed on relevant requirements.

### **Partners**

Our Partnership Process Steering Group (PPSG) was established in line with the principle of Partnership. The partners have been included throughout the development process and provided input across many areas including; shaping the Needs Analysis, informing the Partnership Agreement and the ERDF and ESF Programmes. Partners also were involved in the public consultations and analysed the outcomes for the various CPR funds. They provided advice on prioritisation and strategic direction for the various programmes, and provided comments and direction on complementarities and synergies across the funds.

Members of the PPSG have also provided expert advice and guidance to the Managing Authorities. For example, this includes our partners from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) who assisted in agreeing a common approach to the horizontal enabling conditions on the effective application and implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU CFR) and the implementation and application of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD). It is intended that these partners will be involved throughout the programming period through the various monitoring committees and as outlined below, technical assistance will be utilised to reinforce the administrative capacity of our partners.

### **Technical Assistance**

Technical assistance is expected to be used to reinforce the administrative capacity of the authorities involved in the management and control of the programme and its beneficiaries. This may include capacity building of intermediate bodies, partners and beneficiaries, additional staff resources and training to increase capacity in relation to all areas of the cascade including; management verifications, audit, monitoring, reporting, evaluation of operations, communications, procurement and the horizontal principles. Technical assistance will be used to procure expert ICT advice and to develop the electronic data exchange and data collection systems required for the 2021-27 programming period. Technical assistance may also be used to procure expertise, particularly in specialist areas, including, evaluation expertise, advice in relation to state aid compliance, ICT, communications and horizontal principles. The potential for further increasing the uptake of Simplified Cost Options will be explored with a view to reducing administrative burden.

### **ICT Approach**

An independent assessment of the current eCohesion system was conducted in Q3 2021. Due to limitations identified, it was recommended that that system should not be used for the 2021-2027 funding round. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, having responsibility for ERDF, RRF and BAR are considering the ICT solution procured by the Office of Government's Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) for these funds. It is expected that this solution will be operational by Q3 2022. As the EU JTF has similar characteristics of the ERDF, it is expected that the EU JTF will also use

this solution. EMFAF and ESF+ are procuring their own systems. It is expected that these systems will be operational by early Q1 and Q3 2023 respectively.

### **Working Groups**

Programming Authorities under CPR and other funds will actively co-operate to build Administrative Capacity through special purpose working groups. This model is already being used for a multi-fund working group on Simplified Costs Options in 2021-2027.

### **TAIEX Peer to Peer**

In cooperation with this support, TAIEX Peer to Peer is an instrument whereby experts from national administrations exchange expertise through expert missions, study visits and workshops. For example, our Simplified Cost Option (SCO) Working Group availed of a TAIEX Peer to Peer Workshop, which provided attendees with a practical insight into how SCO's are currently being implemented in other Member States. ERDF Managing and Audit Authorities also availed of expertise via TAIEX on State Aid. This network will be availed of as required throughout the programming period.

10. An integrated approach to address the demographic challenges and/or specific needs of regions and areas (where appropriate)

Reference: point (j) of Article 11(1) CPR and Article 10 ERDF and CF regulation

According to the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES), Ireland's population is expected to increase by around 1 million by 2040, requiring an estimated 660,000 new jobs and 500,000 new homes during this time. By 2040, population projections suggest that there will be between 490,000 and 540,000 additional people living in the Eastern and Midland Region (EMR), between 340,000 and 380,000 additional people living in the Southern Region (SR) and between 160,000 and 180,000 additional people living in the Northern and Western Region (NWR)[1]. By 2031 alone, the population of the Dublin Metropolitan Area is expected to increase by around 250,000 people. Failure to manage such significant population growth could exasperate existing spatial and economic challenges facing Ireland.

To sustainably manage these demographic trends, the NPF and the RSESs[2][3][4] provide a statutory, long-term, strategic investment framework for the spatial, economic and social development of all regions across Ireland. By collectively focusing on strategic areas ranging from population levels, housing, transport, health, education, green infrastructure, enterprise development and the transition to a low carbon society, the NPF and the RSESs identify regional assets, opportunities and pressures, providing an overarching policy response in the form of "National Policy Objectives" and "Regional Policy Objectives".

Within this context, the overarching vision of the RSES of the EMR is "**Healthy Placemaking**", "**Climate Action**" and "**Economic Opportunity**", the underlying principles of the RSES of the SR is to become one of Europe's most "**Creative and Innovative**", "**Greenest**" and "**Liveable**" regions, while the RSES of the NWR outlines ambitions for the region to become more "**Urban**", "**Connected**", "**Smart**", "**Specialised**" and "**Green**", with a settlement strategy focusing on '**People and Places**'.

To achieve these visions, the NPF and the RSESs aim to deliver an investment framework that supports the 50:50 distribution of growth between the EMR, and the SR and the NWR, with 75% of projected growth to be outside of Dublin and its suburbs. In conjunction to this, the NPF and the RSESs also aim to achieve more concentrated growth in the coming years through ambitious compact growth targets. In this regard, these targets aim to ensure at least 50% of all new homes that are targeted in each region's Metropolitan Areas – namely Dublin, Galway, Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford – are to be delivered within their existing built-up footprints, with compact growth targets also outlined for designated Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns in each region in Ireland.

Given the distinctive challenges facing each region in Ireland, the implementation of the NPF and the RSESs could not be more important. Notably, commute times in the EMR continue to remain high – with above average one-way commutes times recorded in the Midlands (29 minutes), Dublin (31 minutes) and the Mid-East (34 minutes[5]) – while population densities in rural oriented regions such as the Border and the West – at 36 and 34 persons per sq. km respectively – continue to remain considerably low relative to the State average (72), the EU 27 (109) and Dublin (1,513)[6]. On this basis, it is clear that delivering the vision and objectives of the NPF and the RSESs will assist in managing future population and employment growth, enhancing the quality of life of each region's citizens while supporting sustainable settlement and mobility patterns across Ireland.

[1] <https://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>

- [2] <http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>
- [3] [https://emra.ie/dubh/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/EMRA\\_RSES\\_1.4.5web.pdf](https://emra.ie/dubh/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/EMRA_RSES_1.4.5web.pdf)
- [4] <https://www.nwra.ie/pdfs/NWRA-RSES-2020-2032.pdf>
- [5] <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/br/b-lfstb/labourforcesurvey>
- [6] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/regions/data/database>

11. A summary of the assessment of the fulfilment of relevant enabling conditions referred to in Article 15 and Annexes III and IV (optional)

Reference: Article 11 CPR

Table 11: Enabling Conditions

Enabling condition	Fund	Selected specific objective	Summary of assessment
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## 12. Preliminary climate contribution target

Reference: Article 6(2) and point (d) of Article 11(1) CPR

Fund	Preliminary climate contribution <sup>1</sup>
ERDF	118,714,814.00

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding to information included or to be included in programmes as a result of the types of intervention and the indicative financial breakdown pursuant to point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

## DOCUMENTS

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
Partnership Agreement snapshot 2021IE16FFPA001 1.1	Snapshot of data before send	25-Aug-2022		Ares(2022)5932528	Partnership_Agreement_snapshot_2021IE16FFPA001_1.1_en.pdf	25-Aug-2022	McGrath, Ruth