

Guidelines for Priority Area Coordinators and Steering Groups

START and TAF-DRP Calls – May 2015

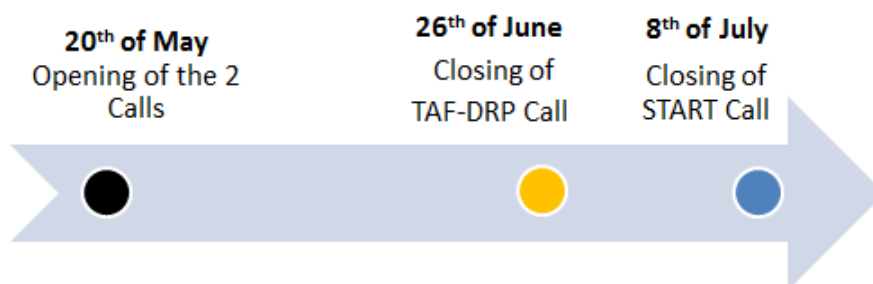
Table of contents

Introduction.....	2
Reporting on the two Facilities	2
Contact	2
START	3
1. Basic principles of START – Danube Region Project Fund	3
2. Main specificities of this Call	3
3. The management structure of START (no changes from Call 1)	4
4. Provisional calendar	6
5. Procedure of the Call.....	6
TAF-DRP.....	10
1. Basic principles of TAF-DRP	10
2. Main specificities of this Call	10
3. The management structure of TAF-DRP.....	11
4. Provisional calendar	13
5. Procedure of the Call.....	13

Introduction

This document provides general information for Priority Area Coordinators and their Steering Group regarding the main principles and procedures applying to the Calls 2015 of the Pilot initiatives TAF-DRP and START.

Most procedures are similar for START and TAF-DRP, however there are **specificities and a different calendar for each Call!**



The TAF-DRP and START Calls 2015 are **Open Calls**: any interested organisation in the Danube Region can download the application pack for each Call from the website of PA10: www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu.

Beware that the **Guidelines for Applicants contain specific rules regarding “multiple” applications** (e.g. it is not allowed to apply at the same time for START and for TAF-DRP for the same project).

PACs themselves are not eligible applicants under these Calls (based on recommendations of TAF-DRP evaluator and PAC meeting of 20.3.2015).

Reporting on the two Facilities

PAC10 reports twice a year to DG Regional Policy on the state of implementation of START and TAF-DRP. In particular, the progress of the Facilities is documented and following data is provided: number of projects submitted; number of projects supported; outputs; number of countries and Priority Areas addressed. These reports can be shared with the PACs upon request.

PACs are personally informed on the progress of the Facilities at PAC meetings and through regular mailings.

Contact

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

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START

The **Application Pack** can be downloaded from the website of PA10: <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/start-call2>. The Application Pack consists of: **Guidelines for Applicants; Eligibility Rules & Declaration of Expenses; Application Form and Project Budget Plan.**

1. Basic principles of START – Danube Region Project Fund

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

Objective

- The objective of START, in accordance with Commission Decision C(2013) 6180 of 27.09.2013, is to **“kick-start project development** in the Danube Region and to **facilitate the financing of transnational projects”**.
- START is to help organisations and institutions in the Danube Region to develop and implement their project ideas.

The “Seed Money” principle



The provided support is in the form of **Seed Money**, meaning that beneficiaries receive a **large pre-financing** for their projects (50% of the START grant is paid at the beginning of the project). This advance provides project partners with the cash-flow necessary to finance their activities. A second pre-payment of 25% can be paid at midterm, if certain conditions are fulfilled. In order to guarantee the commitment of beneficiaries to their project, **project partners must co-finance at minimum 10%** of the project total costs.

A pilot initiative

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

2. Main specificities of this Call

Last Call for the pilot phase

After the success of the first START Call for projects in 2014 (871 applications submitted), a second Call is now launched in May 2015. No more Call is foreseen in 2015-2016. Integration of START or a comparable Seed Money Facility into the Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) is envisaged from 2017 onwards.

Budget

The budget available for this Call is **450.000€¹**, co-financed for 95% by the European Commission and for 5% by the City of Vienna. With the available budget, **approx. 24 project applications are likely to be selected** (2 per Priority Area) from the entire Danube Region.

¹ The funding available for this call has been transferred from the TAF-DRP budget to the START budget. This transfer was agreed by the European Commission and responds to the important need for small scale funding in the Danube Region.

Requirements for projects – main changes from the previous Call

Possible START funding per project:	€ 10.000,00 – € 20.000,00 (Call 1: max. € 40.000,00)
Possible project duration:	6–8 months (Call 1: 6-12 months)
Restricted Thematic Call for the following Priority Areas: <i>See details in Annex I to the Guidelines for Applicants</i>	PA 02 Energy PA 03 Culture & Tourism PA 04 Water Quality PA 05 Environmental Risks PA 09 People & Skills PA 10 Institutional Capacity and Cooperation (Call 1: Open Call for all PAs/ no thematic restrictions)
Requirements regarding the structure of the projects	Lead Partner + min. 2-max. 3 additional Partners (Call 1: max. 5 additional Partners) Partners from at least 2 Danube Region Countries (Call 1: exceptions foreseen) 2-4 activities are possible (Call 1: 3 to 6)

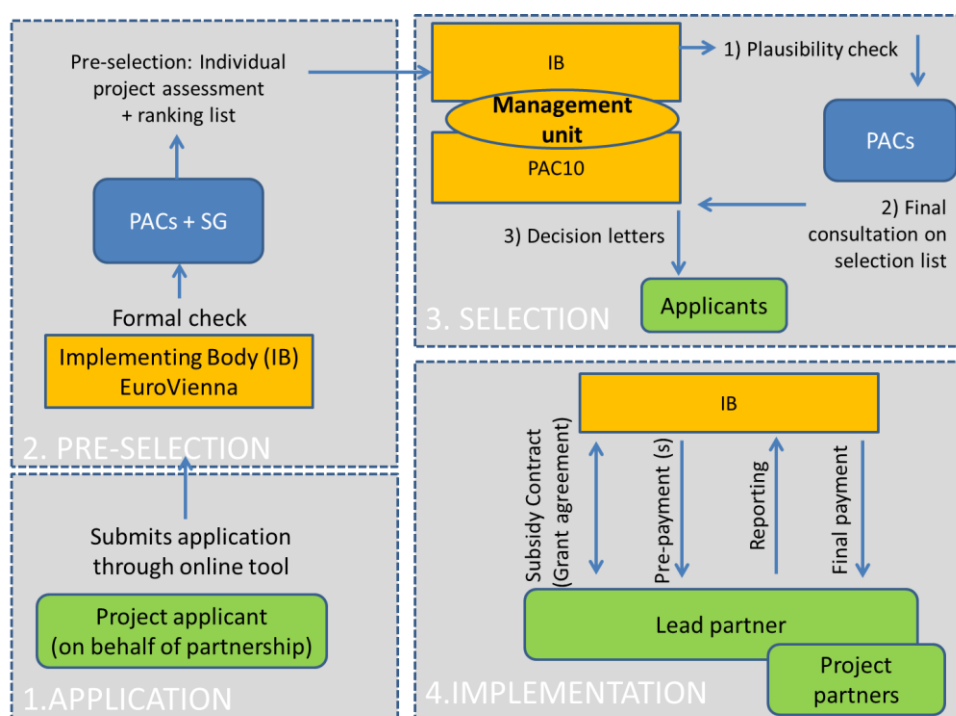
3. The management structure of START (no changes from Call 1)

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

Priority Area 10: Institutional Capacity and Cooperation (PAC10) coordinated by the City of Vienna, has been entrusted by the European Commission to implement the START pilot-initiative.

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

Overview of the management structure and mechanisms of START:



Who is doing what?

Body	Main responsibilities / role
European Commission (EC) DG Regional Policy	As the main financing organisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-finances START (95%) • Receives regular reports on implementation • Can conduct audits / on-the-spot checks
PACs and their Steering Group (SG)	Involvement in the selection and monitoring of START projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the thematic focus of the Call for their PA (optional) • Publicise the START Call (e.g. PA website, personal meetings, mailing lists) • Pre-select projects submitted to the Priority Area concerned • Inform the IB about the results of the pre-selection process (list of assessed projects incl. ranking and comments on individual projects) • Receive the results of the plausibility check and selection list (final consultation) • Where needed, support the IB and projects during project implementation • Receive a copy of the progress reports of projects and of START
PAC10 City of Vienna	Coordination of START: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in project assessment (plausibility check) • Validates selected projects (taking into consideration the thematic and geographic balance between projects and the available budget) • Communicates the selection results to PACs and applicants • Reports to European Commission, City of Vienna, etc.
Management Unit Implementing Body (IB) EuroVienna	Implementation of START: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organises and disseminates the Call (website + information to PACs) • Coordinates the formal check + plausibility check of project proposals • Contracts selected projects • Monitors and verifies project activities, outputs and expenditure • Transfers payments to lead partners (recovery procedure where needed) • Organises the certification of project expenditure (outsourced to an auditor)
Lead applicant / lead partner (LP)	At the application stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates the preparation of the project application • Signs and submits the project application on behalf of the project partnership At the implementation stage (if the project is selected): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs the subsidy contract (called "Grant Agreement") with the IB • Receives the advance payment(s) from the IB and coordinates project spending • In case of recovery procedure, reimburses unduly paid funds to the IB (no matter whether the LP or a partner is responsible for the unduly paid funds) • Coordinates and submits project progress reports to the IB • Receives the payment of the balance, transfers their share to project partners • Keeps project documents in archive after project closure
Project partners (incl. lead partner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement project activities according to agreed terms and eligibility rules • Provide information, documentation upon request by the IB and in case of audits or on-the-spot checks by an auditor

4. Provisional calendar

Please consider that **this calendar is provisional and may be adjusted over time if needed!**

The entries underlined refer to the steps in which PACs/SG are involved (see details in section 5 **Fehler!** **Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** below):

STEP 1	20 th of May	Launch of the Call on PA10 and Danube Region websites
	Until 6 th of July	<u>PACs disseminate the Call among their stakeholders</u> Applicants download the application pack and prepare their application
	6 th - 8 th of July (until 12.00 CET)	Online submission of applications – Closing of the Call
STEP 2	8 th – 25 th of July	Formal check by IB
STEP 3	27 th of July – 18 th of September	<u>Pre-selection by PACs and SG</u>
STEP 4	21 st of Sept. – 9 th of October	Plausibility check of best-ranked applications by Management Unit – incl. consideration of budget, thematic and geographic balance → IB sends the outcomes of the selection to PACs
STEP 5	9 th – 20 th of October	<u>Final consultation of PACs and their SG on the list of selected projects</u>
STEP 6	Until end of October	Notification of applicants by PAC10
STEP 7	November-December	Contracting with selected applicants
STEP 8	Between November 2015 & February 2016	Beginning of project implementation
	July 2016	Closing of the last projects

5. Procedure of the Call

5.1. STEP 1 – Opening and closing of the Call

The Application Pack is available for download on the website of PA 10 <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/start-call2> from 20th of May until 6th of July 2015.

- PACs and their Steering Group are invited to **publicise** the Call among their stakeholders, through their website, mailings, etc.
- During the Call, PACs may be contacted by applicants asking for **support** in completing the application form, in defining their project and its thematic focus. For PAs which have opted for a **Restricted Thematic Call**, the details of the applicable thematic focuses are indicated in Annex I to the Guidelines for Applicants. Concerned applicants must indicate the selected thematic focus in the Application Form and justify the contribution of their project to the selected thematic focus. A link to the websites of the PAs is provided in the Guidelines for Applicants.
- For **technical questions**, PACs may of course **contact EuroVienna**.

Basics of the application procedure

The application consists of a Word application form and an Excel budget plan to be filled in by applicants and uploaded/submitted through an online application tool, which will only be opened from 6th to 8th of July (12:00 CET). After this, applications cannot be uploaded and will not be assessed.

5.2. STEP 2 – Formal check of submitted applications

After the closing of the Call (8th of July), the IB will conduct a formal check of all applications submitted through the online application tool by the deadline.

Following points will be checked:

- Is the application **complete** and **submitted in the right way**? Are there major **discrepancies** in the provided information?
- Does the application comply with the **basic eligibility criteria**? (partnership requirements, location, requested amount, number of activities, timeframe, etc.)

Incomplete applications or applications where formal criteria are not fulfilled will not be subject to further assessment. The content of the projects, their thematic and macro-regional relevance will not be checked by the IB.

For each Priority Area, the results of the formal check will be communicated to PACs (see details below).

5.3. STEP 3 - Project pre-selection by the PACs and their Steering Group

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

Accordingly PACs and their Steering Group are expected to conduct a sound and **documented** assessment of **each** individual project and establish a **ranking list** of the project proposals.

To conduct this assessment, PACs will receive following documents after the formal check (approx. 27th of July):

- **List of all applications** submitted to the Priority Area including result of the formal check
- All **project application forms** of the Priority Area that passed the formal check
- **List of all applications** from all Priority Areas that **passed the formal check**
- **Grid for pre-selection**, a template for documentation of the results of the pre-selection
- **Guidelines for the pre-selection procedure**

PACs must send the results and documentation of the pre-selection (incl. ranking list) latest by 18th of September to the IB.

The first project on the ranking list is considered to be of highest priority to the PA and to best fulfil the below criteria. With sending the ranking list, the official support of the PACs/SG to the projects is declared. The provision of a **letter of support is not requested**.

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

Applicant and project partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the partnership relevant for the purpose of the project?
Relevance of the project:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project of public interest? • Is the project relevant for the EUSDR and in particular for the PA addressed (Contribution of the project to the PA's Action Plan – and if applicable, to the

	<p>selected thematic focus(es))?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If START funding is requested to finance a specific part of a larger project: is the overall project relevant for the EUSDR? • Is the requested EU grant adequate/justified to reach the project objectives and implement project activities? <i>(Remark: this aspect will be also assessed in detail as part of the plausibility check)</i>
Macro-regional dimension or impact of the project:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the project activities taking place in the Danube Region? • Are expected project results of relevance for the Danube Region?
Professional experience of the applicant/partnership, which can be assessed through the quality of the application form:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the application clear (style, layout, etc), understandable (language) and concise? • Is the planned project well described, realistic and feasible? • Is there a consistency between planned project objectives, activities and budget? <i>(Remark: this aspect will also be assessed in detail as part of the plausibility check)</i>

5.4. STEP 4 – Plausibility check

A final eligibility and plausibility check is conducted by the START “Management Unit” composed by PAC10 Vienna and the Implementing Body.

The **best ranked applications** will be considered in priority for the final plausibility check. The Management Unit will only consider applications with a lower ranking, if an application fails the plausibility check or it is necessary to ensure the **overall balance*** between projects.

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

Following elements will be assessed:

Eligible applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of the eligibility of the applicant (e.g. legal personality, compliance with the rules defined for “multiple applications”, etc)
Adequacy between project objectives, planned activities and budget:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it plausible to reach the project objectives with the planned activities and budget? • Is the planned budget adequate to implement the project?
Indicators and targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the planned indicators and targets realistic and correspond to the project objectives and planned activities?
Expected change to the status quo:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In case the project is a part of an overall project (Type A): Is the relationship between the START-part of the project and the overall project clear and logic? • In case the project is the implementation of a small project (Type B): Is the macro-regional dimension of the expected results plausible?
Timeline:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the timeline for implementation of activities plausible?

During this process, the Management Unit reserves the right to **contact the applicants and the supporting PACs** for clarifications and/or provision of missing information.

5.5. STEP 5 – Final consultation of PACs

After finalising the plausibility check, the Management Unit establishes a **final list of selected projects** and sends it to the PACs, who have the opportunity to send comments. This final consultation is foreseen for end of October 2015. If no comments are sent, the principle of tacit consent is applied.

5.6. STEP 6 – Notification of applicants

Selected and non-selected applicants as well as the PACs are notified in writing.

5.7. STEP 7 – Contracting

➔ *See Guidelines for Applicants*

Selected applicants must adapt the project description and the project budget plan (both annexes to the Grant Agreement) according to the eligibility rules and the final approved START amount. Once both documents are approved by the IB, the individual Grant Agreement between the Lead Partner and the IB will be signed and the first pre-financing rate will be paid. Concerned PACs will receive a copy of the signed Grant Agreement.

5.8. STEP 8 – Project implementation

➔ *See Guidelines for Applicants*

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

Project partners are expected to **provide any information requested by the PACs** during and/or after project implementation. This is specified in the Grant Agreement.

TAF-DRP

The **Application Pack (Guidelines for Applicants and Application Form)** can be downloaded from the website of PA10: <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/taf-drp-2>.

1. Basic principles of TAF-DRP

The **development of qualitative projects** in a transnational, macro-regional environment is a challenging venture. In order to give momentum to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) for the programming period 2014-2020 and to support the preparation of projects with a clear EUSDR added-value, the European Commission decided in 2013 to establish a Technical Assistance for Danube Region Projects (TAF-DRP).

Objective



The objective of **TAF-DRP** is to help organisations and institutions in the Danube Region to develop their project ideas into fundable/bankable project concepts, by providing them **technical assistance and advice through TAF-DRP experts**. Selected applicants **do not receive a grant!**

A pilot initiative

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

2. Main specificities of this Call

Last Call for the pilot phase

Two Calls for project ideas were organised in 2013 and 2014 and in total 35 project ideas received technical assistance. Before the launch of this third Call an **external evaluation of TAF-DRP** was conducted at the end of 2014 (evaluation report available on PA10 website) and most recommendations have been integrated into the present Call. This third Call for proposals is the last one in the period 2015-2016. Integration of TAF-DRP or a comparable Facility into a mainstream instrument from 2017 onwards is currently not known.

Budget

The budget available for expert services in this Call is **450.000€²**, co-financed for 95% by the European Commission and for 5% by the City of Vienna. With the available budget, **between 15-20 project ideas** will receive technical assistance services (this covers a **service value of approx. 25.000€ incl. VAT** and 1-2 travels per project). The geographic and thematic balance between selected project ideas will be ensured at the selection stage.

Open Call with thematic restrictions

While the first two calls for project proposals were organised on a decentralised basis by the PAs, this call is organised as an open call, which guarantees more transparency and visibility: any organisation can download the application pack and decide to apply.

² 50% of the original budget of 900.000€ was transferred from the TAF-DRP budget to the START budget. This transfer was agreed by the European Commission.

However, and as agreed in March 2015, some PAs have decided to go for a **Restricted Thematic Call** with pre-defined thematic focus(es):

PA 02	Energy	PA 09	People & Skills
PA 03	Culture & Tourism	PA 10	Institutional Capacity and Cooperation
PA 04	Water Quality		

➔ See details in Annex I to the Guidelines for Applicants

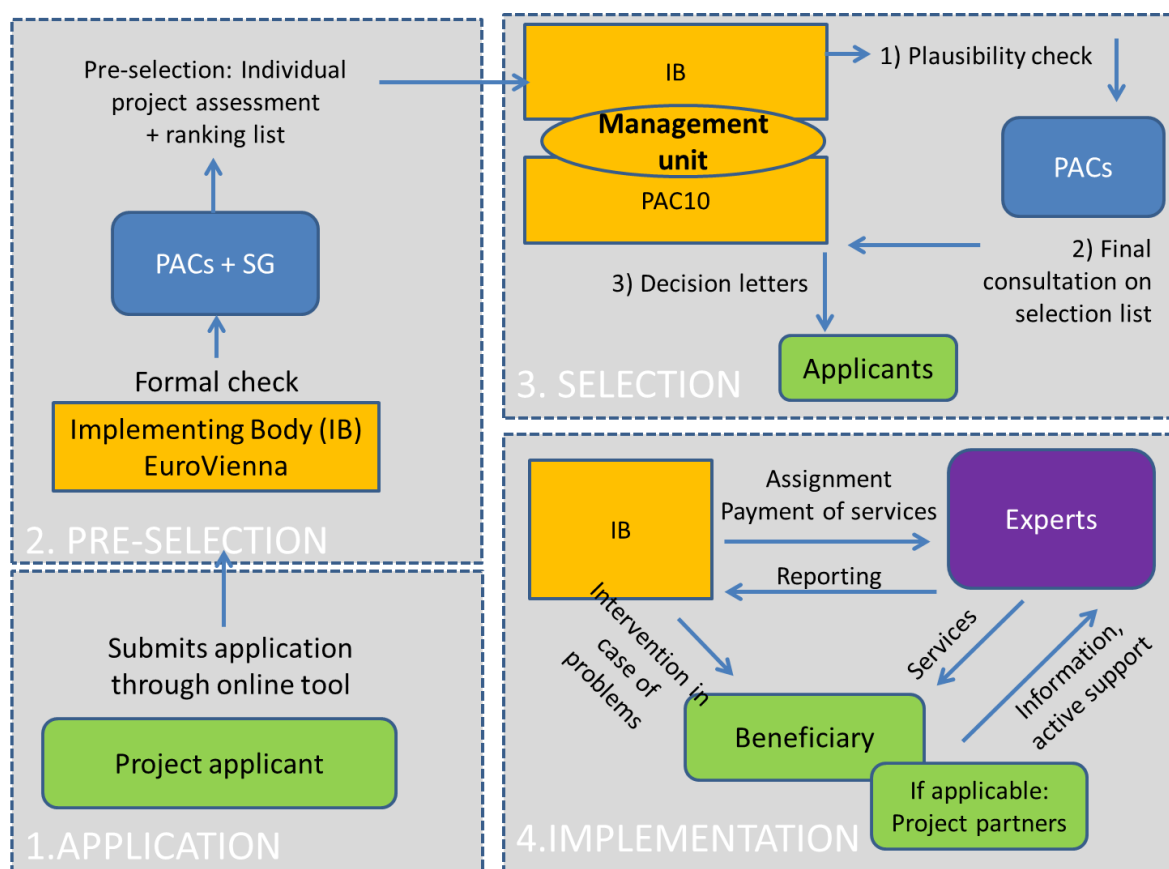
3. The management structure of TAF-DRP

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

Priority Area 10: Institutional Capacity and Cooperation (PAC10) coordinated by the City of Vienna, has been entrusted by the European Commission to implement the TAF-DRP pilot-initiative.

The operational implementation of TAF-DRP has been assigned to **EuroVienna EU-consulting & -management GmbH**, (hereinafter referred to as “*Implementing Body - IB*”).

Overview of the management structure and mechanisms of TAF-DRP:



Who is doing what?

Body	Main responsibilities / role
DG Regional Policy	<p>As the main financing organisation of TAF-DRP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-finances TAF-DRP (95%) Receives regular reports on implementation
PACs and their Steering Group (SG)	<p>Involvement in the selection and monitoring of TAF-DRP projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the thematic focus(es) of the Call for their PA (optional) Publicise the TAF-DRP Call (e.g. PA website, personal meetings, mailing lists) Pre-select projects submitted to the Priority Area concerned Inform the IB about the results of the pre-selection process (list of assessed projects incl. ranking and comments on individual projects) Receive the results of the plausibility check and selection list (final consultation) Where needed, support the IB and projects during implementation of TAF-DRP services Receive a copy of the validated expert reports for individual projects
PAC10 City of Vienna	<p>Coordination of TAF-DRP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participates in project assessment (plausibility check) Validates selected project ideas (taking into consideration the thematic and geographic balance between projects and the available budget) Communicates the selection results to PACs and applicants Where needed, intervenes in case of problems with individual assignments (incl. possible interruption of services) Reports to European Commission, City of Vienna, etc.
Management Unit Implementing Body (IB) EuroVienna	<p>Implementation of TAF-DRP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organises and disseminates the Call (website + information to PACs) Coordinates the formal check + plausibility check of project proposals Assigns selected projects to the experts (incl. negotiation/validation of offers) Monitors and verifies expert services Requests and verifies follow-up reports by the beneficiaries
Applicant/beneficiary	<p>At the application stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinates the preparation of the project application Signs and submits the project application <p>At the implementation stage (if the project idea is selected):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the ownership of the project Actively supports the expert(s) by e.g. delivering information and documents, participating in meetings, and in general taking actions necessary for development of the project idea In case of a partnership: coordinates participation of the partners <p>After conclusion of TAF-DRP services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements the follow-up actions recommended by the expert(s) Delivers a follow-up report to the IB by the defined deadline
TAF-DRP Experts	Support the beneficiary to develop the project idea into a fundable project concept.

4. Provisional calendar

Please consider that **this calendar is provisional and may be adjusted over time if needed!**

The entries underlined refer to the steps in which PACs/SG are involved (see details in section **Fehler!** **Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** below):

STEP 1	20 th of May	Launch of the Call on PA10 and Danube Region websites
	Until 24 th of June	<u>PACs disseminate the Call among their stakeholders</u> Applicants download the application pack and prepare their application
	24 th -26 th of June (until 12.00 CET)	Online submission of applications – Closing of the Call
STEP 2	29 th of June – 10 th of July	Formal check by IB
STEP 3	13 th of July – 1 st of September	<u>Pre-selection by PACs and SG</u>
STEP 4	2 nd – 14 th of September	Plausibility check of best-ranked applications by Management Unit – incl. consideration of budget, thematic and geographic balance → IB sends the outcomes of the selection to PACs
STEP 5	15 th – 30 th of September	<u>Final consultation of PACs and their SG on the list of selected projects</u>
STEP 6	Beginning of October	Notification of applicants by PAC10
STEP 7	October 2015 – April/May 2016	Assignments / Delivery of expert services
STEP 8	Autumn 2016	Follow up reports by beneficiaries

5. Procedure of the Call

Based on the recommendations of the external evaluator of the first phase of TAF-DRP, several modifications have been brought for this third Call. The procedure is now very similar to the procedure used in the START pilot-initiative, which guarantees more transparency (Open Call, documentation of all assessed applications), reduces the workload for PACs (through the centralised formal check done by the IB prior to the pre-selection phase) and reinforces the role of PACs in decision-making (final written consultation of PACs on selected applications).

5.1. STEP 1 – Opening and closing of the Call

The Application Pack is available for download on the website of PA 10 <http://www.danube-capacitycooperation.eu/pages/taf-drp-2> from 20th of May until 24th of June 2015.

- PACs and their Steering Group are invited to **publicise** the Call among their stakeholders, through their website, mailings, etc.
- During the Call, PACs may be contacted by applicants asking for **support** in completing the application form, in defining their project and its thematic focus. For PAs which have opted for a **Restricted**

Thematic Call, the details of the applicable thematic focuses are indicated in Annex I to the Guidelines for Applicants. Concerned applicants must indicate the selected thematic focus in the Application Form and justify the contribution of their project to the selected thematic focus. A link to the websites of the PAs is provided in the Guidelines for Applicants.

- For **technical questions**, PACs may of course **contact EuroVienna**.

Basics of the application procedure

The application form is a word template to be filled in by applicants and uploaded/submitted through an online application tool which will only be opened from 24th to 26th of June (12:00 CET). After this, applications cannot be uploaded and will not be assessed.

5.2. STEP 2 – Formal check of submitted applications

After the closing of the Call (26th of June), the IB will conduct a formal check of all applications submitted through the online application tool by the deadline.

Following points will be checked:

- Is the application **complete and submitted correctly**? Are there major **discrepancies** in the provided information?
- Does the application comply with the **basic eligibility criteria**?

Incomplete applications or applications where formal criteria are not fulfilled will not be subject to further assessment. The content of the projects, their thematic and macro-regional relevance will not be checked by the IB.

For each Priority Area, the results of the formal check will be communicated to PACs (see details below).

5.3. STEP 3 - Project pre-selection by the PACs and their Steering Group

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

Hence, PACs and their Steering Group are expected to conduct a sound and **documented** assessment of **each** individual project idea and establish a **ranking list** of the project applications.

To conduct this assessment, PACs will receive following documents after the formal check (approx. 13th of July):

- **List of all applications** submitted to the Priority Area including results of the formal check
- All **project application forms** of the Priority Area that passed the formal check
- **List of all applications** from all Priority Areas that **passed the formal check**
- **Grid for pre-selection**, a template for documentation of the results of the pre-selection
- **Guidelines for the pre-selection procedure**

PACs must send the results and documentation of the pre-selection (incl. ranking list) latest by 1st of September to the IB.

The first project idea on the ranking list is considered to be of highest priority to the PA and to best fulfil the below criteria. With sending the ranking list, the official support of the PACs/SG to the projects is declared. The provision of a **letter of support is no longer requested**.

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

Applicant (and project partners if applicable):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It the applicant/partnership relevant for the purpose of the project? • How far does the applicant/partnership actually need external support/TAF-DRP services?
Relevance of the project:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project of public interest? • Is the project relevant for the EUSDR and in particular for the PA addressed (contribution of the project to the PA's Action Plan – and if applicable, to the selected thematic focus(es))?
Expected change to the status quo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the TAF-DRP services requested adequate in relation to the financial size of the future project? • Are TAF-DRP services likely to make a major contribution to the change of the project status quo? (Remark: these aspects will be also assessed in detail as part of the plausibility check)
Macro-regional dimension or impact of the project:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the future project of macro-regional dimension? • Are expected project results of relevance for the Danube Region?
Commitment of the applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the planned follow-up actions relevant in relation to the project, convincing and realistic? • Do the steps taken so far reveal a solid commitment to the future project?
Clarity of the application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the application clear (style, layout, etc), understandable (language) and concise?

5.4. STEP 4 – Plausibility check

A final eligibility and plausibility check is conducted by the START “Management Unit” composed by PAC10 Vienna and the Implementing Body.

The best ranked applications will be considered in priority for the final plausibility check. The Management Unit will only consider applications with a lower ranking, if an application fails the plausibility check or if it is necessary to ensure the overall balance* between projects.

** TAF-DRP aims at supporting project ideas from all Priority Areas and from the entire Danube Region. The Management Unit therefore also considers the thematic and geographic balance between submitted applications, as well as the available budget for the Call.*

Following elements will be assessed:

Eligible applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of the eligibility of the applicant (e.g. legal personality, compliance with the rules defined for “multiple applications”, etc)
Plausibility of the TAF-DRP services requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the described needs fit to the types of services that can be provided under TAF-DRP? • Do the described needs fit to the project description and description of the status quo? • Are the described needs and TAF-DRP services requested understandable and realistic (e.g. in terms of budget and timeline)?

During this process, the Management Unit reserves the right to **contact the applicants and the supporting PACs** for clarifications and/or provision of missing information.

In any case, for selected applications the exact scope of services will be defined with the assigned experts at the inception phase of TAF-DRP services (see Guidelines for Applicants, section 10).

5.5. STEP 5 – Final consultation of PACs

After finalising the plausibility check, the Management Unit establishes a **final list of selected project ideas** and sends it to the PACs, who have the opportunity to send comments. This final consultation is foreseen for the period 15th to 30th of September. If no comments are sent, the principle of tacit consent is applied.

5.6. STEP 6 – Notification of applicants

Selected and non-selected applicants are notified of the decision in October. The PACs will be informed in writing.

5.7. STEP 7 – Assignments – TAF-DRP expert services

➔ *See Details in Guidelines for Applicants*

As indicated in the calendar in section 4, TAF-DRP expert services are expected to be delivered between approx. October 2015 and April-May 2016.

As shown in the chart in section 3, experts are assigned directly by the IB, on the basis of a framework agreement established with each selected consortium in 2013. The maximum value of expert services is 25.000€ incl. VAT per project. In addition the IB can cover travel costs for 1 to 2 business trips of the expert(s) to the beneficiary, depending on project's individual needs and available budget. The total budget available for expert services and travel costs is 450.000€ incl. VAT.

The expert consortia are led by following companies, like in the first two Calls:

- Los 1: CES clean energy solutions GesmbH
- Los 2: hydrophil GmbH
- Los 3: Metis GmbH

The IB does not sign a contract or agreement with the beneficiaries. However the Management Unit reserves the right to **suspend or to terminate** the expert assignment with an individual beneficiary in case of major issues such as non-cooperation and absence of commitment of the beneficiary. As first step, PACs may be asked to **provide support** e.g. in establishing communication with the beneficiary.

For each project, the concerned PACs will receive a copy of the **validated inception and final reports**, which are to be established by the expert(s) and validated by the Management Unit.

The beneficiary and its partners are expected to **provide any information requested by the PACs** during and/or after delivery of TAF-DRP Services implementation. This is specified in the notification letter.

5.8. STEP 8 – Follow up reports by beneficiaries

➔ *See Details in Guidelines for Applicants*

The beneficiaries are requested to submit a report to the IB regarding the implementation of follow-up actions recommended by the experts. This report is due within approx. 6-8 months of the finalisation of TAF-DRP services, latest by November 2016. The Management Unit reserves the right to inform the concerned PAC in case the requested follow-up report is not submitted by the beneficiary or the report reveals poor commitment of the beneficiary.