

Clarification for the project partners regarding the applicant guides provisions on the *quality audit of the performed works* under the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme

Following recent questions and issues raised by different partners of the projects under implementation in the framework of the Interreg VI-A Romania Bulgaria Programme we have elaborated the present clarification paper in order to explain one provision of the Applicant's Guides for the calls 1 – 6 and the *Invitation for submission of the full Application Form for the project ideas accepted by the Programme in the context of the Integrated Territorial Strategy, following the first call, deadline 4th of April 2025 (Call 7, RSO5.2)* as elaborated for certain calls for proposals within Interreg VI-A Ro-Bg Programme.

Please note that the present document does not include new rules for implementation of the projects, but just provides explanations and / or examples for a better understanding of the rules already included in the Programme's documents or legislation.

Quality audit of the performed works

According with the applicant's guide (Chapter 2.9 - Eligibility of expenditures) of the calls for operations under which the projects were selected for financing it is foreseen that:

1. Applicant's Guides for Calls for Proposal 2, 3, 4: *In case of financing construction works, each partner shall foresee in the application form costs for services for quality audit of the performed works.*
2. Applicant's Guide for calls for Proposals 1 and 5: *In case of financing construction works, each partner shall foresee in the application form costs for services for quality audit of the performed works (including trial and laboratory test by independent companies, where mentioned by the relevant guide).*

According to the provisions of the *Invitation for submission of the full Application Form for the project ideas accepted by the Programme in the context of the Integrated Territorial Strategy, following the first call, deadline 4th of April 2025 (Call 7, RSO5.2)* it is foreseen that "*In case of financing construction works, each partner shall foresee in the application form costs for services for quality audit of the performed works*".

The purpose of this requirement was designed as a key quality assurance and compliance control mechanism to be used by the partners, if they consider necessary. The partners should take a decision having in mind that this audit checks whether the work carried out corresponds exactly to what was approved taking into account:

- the financing contract
- the approved technical project
- technical standards and current legislation
- eligibility requirements.

The term "quality audit" shall be understood, from the Programme perspective, as a preventive and quality assurance mechanism applied throughout the project implementation period, and where relevant, after completion. Its purpose is to ensure that the project investment costs cover:

- Preventive activity,
- Mitigation measures for any defects or risks identified at different stages of project implementation and afterwards, and
- Any potential costs with the necessary supplementary expertise, if the case.

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Correcting them before the final acceptance is much less costly.

In this respect, when a partner decides to perform such a quality audit, should consider the following:

1. Include in the general estimate of the investment, costs identified as relevant for verification of the quality and functionality of certain categories of works:

For example:

- a. In case of construction / modernization of urban parks: tests on automatic irrigation systems: functionality, pressure, coverage; tests on electrical installations for public lighting and video surveillance: continuity, insulation; functional checks on artesian fountains or water features: pumps, recirculation; etc.
- b. In case of construction / modernization of buildings: hydrostatic pressure tests for sanitary or heating systems; electrical test: electrical insulation resistance and earthing tests for internal wiring, functional tests for the heating, ventilation, air conditioning system, elevators or other installed equipment; flood / spray test for roof waterproofing;
- c. For construction or modernization of access roads / parking / etc.: compaction and bearing capacity trials for foundation layers: ballast, cement-stabilized ballast, according with STAS 6400 or SR EN 13286, etc.

The tests may be contracted by the construction company performing the works, based on the work execution contract or may be externalized by the partners to other independent companies, by duly observing the national applicable public procurement rules.

In case expenditures were not already included in the technical documentation submitted together with the application form or elaborated / modified during the contracting period (Feasibility Studies, Preliminary Design, etc.), you may allocate resources in the phase of elaboration of the Technical Design, using economies identified within the implementation period, if available. There is no mandatory minimum number of tests or a minimum value, therefore only the most relevant verifications or tests shall be included.

2. In case internal independent structures of the partners have the necessary competences to perform the quality verifications envisaged for the investment infrastructure, the partners may use them and it is not necessary to externalize such services or include the associated expenditures in the general estimate of the Technical Design.

A quality audit of the work performed can be carried out by an internal structure of the beneficiary, provided that the principles of independence and objectivity are respected.

The internal quality audit can be conducted by:

- The organization's internal audit department
- The internal control / quality management department
- A technical structure separate from the implementation team.

The main purpose of the internal quality audit will be to ensure that the quality system in constructions is implemented according to the national applicable legislation at all stages of investment and afterwards.

The duties of the audit may include:

- get sure that all the quality documents are prepared in accordance with the technical design and applicable national legislation, comply with ISO certification requirements, as well as that

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- are reflecting the reality of the performed works by constant communication with all the parties involved according to the legislation;
- cooperate and liaise with all the entities involved in the investment implementation (designer, contractor, site supervisor, management and control bodies);
 - presenting to all the entities involved in the project implementation/monitoring/ audit/ control and organizing and summarizing all the issues/problems encountered along with the mitigation actions considered, in any stage.
 - participate in the reception of works commission and ensure that the executed works observe the quality conditions and are fully functional.

This position for the partner's responsible for quality audit may complement the duties of the site supervisor.

If such audit checks are available at the partner's level, the Joint Secretariat shall be informed at the moment when the partners submit the elaborated technical project to JS (according with the Project Implementation Manual, partners shall submit the elaborated technical projects of the investments after reception and after receiving the construction authorization, together with a statement of the legal representative, clarifying if the elaborated technical project includes or not modification compared with the technical documentation attached to the financing contract of the project). The information submitted to JS shall include the fact that there is quality audit verification available at the partner's level and to present its main tasks related with the project investment activities.

Note: *It is not mandatory to include costs for services for quality audit of the performed works in case of the investments (works, infrastructure and equipment), for which the national legislation does not provide for the elaboration of a Feasibility Study/DALI or preliminary/technical design and where the applicants were requested by the Applicant's Guides to submit only a detailed Bill of Quantities and Costs accompanied by the detailed explanations/plans/ measurements of the object/s of intervention, used for estimating the necessary works and costs.*