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European Competence Centre for Social Innovation
ESF+ Social Innovation+ Initiative
ALMA network

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

This initiative is implemented under the EaSI strand of the ESF+

Network	ALMA network
Programme year	March – December 2024
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<p>The ALMA network is organized and supported by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation under the ESF+ Social Innovation+ Initiative. This initiative aims at facilitating transnational cooperation to boost the transfer and scaling up of innovative solutions aimed at reducing inequalities across the EU, especially in the policy areas of employment, skills and social inclusion.</p>	

Objectives of the ALMA network

The ALMA network was established on the 28 September 2022 as successor of the TLN Mobility Network with the objective to:

- support MS and regions launching ALMA mobility programmes under their national and regional ESF+ Operational Programmes 2021-2027,
- encourage more Member States and regions to participate in ALMA.

Network activities focus on:

- Coordination and practical support for launching and implementing ALMA calls at different levels: from the planning to the drafting of calls, and to supporting the different phases of the implementation, depending on the needs of network partners. They will have the opportunity to address challenges, share good practices and discuss different approaches and solutions.
- Work on specific and cross-cutting themes to ensure high quality and further development/improvement of the ALMA programmes: measuring soft outcomes/ soft indicators, taking forward SCO, validation concept for mobility programmes.
- Reach out to a wider audience with information sessions about the state of play regarding national/regional ALMA mobility programmes and activities of the ALMA network to promote ALMA and encourage more Member States and regions to implement ALMA.
- Providing support for the central ALMA call directly implemented and managed in 2023/2024 by the ESF Agency in Lithuania (ESFA) as an additional strand for ALMA projects.

ALMA network partners

The core group of the ALMA network are Managing Authorities and Implementing Bodies at national and regional levels who are currently implementing or planning to implement ALMA measures under their national or regional ESF+ Programmes 2021-2027.

A second group (Extended group) comprises MAs/IBs who might be still indetermined or want to implement ALMA later in the current ESF+ period, as well as other relevant stakeholders involved in the ALMA initiative. The network will promote with this group information sessions and various events.

A third and separate group are the ALMA projects at EU level which the network will support in terms of transnational partner search activities and learning/training sessions.

Ensuring members' involvement

The work of the ALMA network depends very much on the active participation and commitment of its members. There is a lot of experience from previous mobility programmes which network members can take advantage of, and a range of models for implementing ALMA mobility measures that can be adapted to local needs.

The network follows a bottom-up approach by shaping the work programme on the basis of the members' needs. Members are actively involved in the planning of meeting agendas and invited to bring in their own topics.

As in 2023, the work programme 2024 is to be seen as a "living document" which will remain open for further development throughout the work process.

Proposed activities and outputs (results)

As stated above, the network provides a coordination platform and support for preparing, launching and implementing ALMA calls at different levels. This includes:

- templates and technical guidance for the drafting of calls,
- a transnational partner search database and transnational partner search activities for project operators once the calls have been launched, and
- peer learning between MAs/IBs during the implementation phase of ALMA programmes.

The following specific topics/work packages have been identified by network partners in 2023 and will be continued in 2024 according to participants' needs:

Topics	Activities/Outputs
Updates on nat./reg. and central ALMA call Survey update on national/regional ALMA calls as basis for the	Creation of an online EU map where all ALMA programmes in Europe are visible with some key information and links to relevant websites (in conjunction with the new SI+ website currently developed by ESFA).
Finance/Use of SCO/EU Delegated Act Calculation, legal basis, application of EU Delegated Act to national/regional calls and projects, potential amendments, activities to be covered, audit of costs incurred in foreign countries	Discussion of different kinds of funding schemes (DA, different SCO, real costs, mix of both), defining budget for projects, eligibility of activities, sharing (different) practices, Overview ALMA funding schemes ⇒ link to EC, TN Simplification
Most vulnerable NEETs Definition, outreach, challenges Complex term comprising a range of different groups, also depending on labour market factors	Presentation of Member State - specific target groups for ALMA and discussion of specific questions partner may have when drafting calls
Launching/ drafting calls Explanation differences between ALMA and other mobility programmes (ERASMUS+), programme cycle and project cycle, support tools, practical guidance (step-by-step) incl. challenges and	Scheme with ALMA specific key elements (framework, timeline, application process, selection criteria, support to projects) Sharing good practices, mutual support

potential solutions (finding suitable project operators)	
Transnational Cooperation Finding transnational partners and foreign companies, practical aspects of organising the stay abroad and placement, risk management	Support tools (TCA, Partner search database) Many good examples (ALMA Handbook etc.) Sharing/presenting good practices, learning sessions
National cooperation Partnership, involvement PES, companies, local stakeholders	Sharing good practices, addressing specific questions partners may have
Evaluation/Assessment ALMA specific and ESF+ indicators, selection criteria	Not yet started Collecting/checking existing material and practices, Work package “Measuring soft outcomes” Presentation EU-study, link to CoP EES

In 2024 the ALMA network will also start work on 2 more work packages relevant for the successful implementation and further development/improvement of ALMA programmes:

- Measuring soft outcomes /soft indicators => starting spring 2024

Measuring ‘distance travelled’ by participants can demonstrate the impact of mobility measures. Several tried and tested tools as well as a *Study on the pathways to enhance the use of programme-specific indicators in the ESF and ESF+* published by EC in April 2022 and including soft indicators.

- Validation of mobility programmes/calls => starting end of 2024

The TLN Mobility already started to work on this idea.

A validation concept could look into the following 4 categories:

- Added value for participants/NEETs (*programme impact*) => also linked to /soft indicators
- Identify factors that explain the causal effects of the programme (*programme impact*)
- Impact on national implementation partners/project partners (*network impact*)
- Added value of ALMA network.

It could start with a Meta-evaluation looking at previous national/regional programmes and national/regional evaluation results or plans. This will be followed by qualitative interviews with evaluators and ALMA partners.

It’s important to underline that validation means collecting results and drawing conclusions, not comparing them or rating programmes. In this respect the ALMA network can be considered as a pool of good practices and results with various positive impacts and results.

The work programme 2024 foresees 4 network meetings/events plus the SI+ CoP Forum including an ALMA workshop:

6th meeting 23/24 April 2024 (on-site) – joint meeting with ALMA central call project operators

- Internal network meeting with updates ongoing activities (mobility programmes, work packages and other follow-ups)
- Topics to be defined according to the final work programme 2024 and participants’ needs
- Work package “Measuring soft outcomes”
- Joint session with ALMA central call project operators
- Project visit/project presentation

7th meeting June 2024 (on-site) place tbd

- Updates ongoing activities...topics to be defined (as above)
- Overview on funding schemes of existing ALMA programmes
- Content of ALMA section of the new SI+ platform (general information, EU-map, PSD etc.)
- Project visit on the 2nd day?

SI+ CoP Forum 2-3 Oct 2024 (on-site) Brussels

- Plenary sessions for all CoPs and Networks
- ALMA workshop

8th September/October 2024 online meeting or joint meeting with ALMA central call project operators

Presentation and use of new SI+ platform

- Updates ongoing activities (mobility programmes, work packages and other follow-ups)
- Topics to be defined according to the final work programme and participants' needs)

9th meeting 1st week Dec 2024 (on-site?)

- Updates ongoing activities...topics to be defined (as above)
- Reflections on the work done in 2024
- Discussion draft work programme 2025, comments and suggestions

Depending on the subject meetings can take the form of learning sessions/workshops, action learning sets¹, peer learning or peer-to-peer-trainings, study visits etc.

Further activities include the promotion of ALMA/ Outreach activities (information sessions) and links to CoPs, ERASMUS+ and other EU initiatives to explore possible synergies.

Dissemination of results

Reports of the network's meetings (summary, actions planned, next steps etc.) and ongoing activities to be shared with network partners in the internal ALMA section/workspace of the [ALMA network MS Teams channel](#).

Information on ALMA mobility programmes launched by network partners and central ALMA call, general information including upcoming events and summary reports for a wider audience will be published on the [ESFA website](#). Once SI+ website is in place, it will include a specific page ALMA. Information will also be published on the EC's ALMA website.

Teamwork organisation and logistics

ESFA and the ALMA network coordinator will function as a secretariat and provide organizational and technical support for networks activities.

A Steering group composed by the ALMA network coordinator/ESFA, EC representatives, a thematic expert and representatives of an ESF MAs/IBs (as practitioners tbd) will oversee the implementation of the workplan and monitor network activities.

¹ Practical peer support from members for a specific problem/challenge one of the partners might have and help him to develop an action plan to solve that problem.

The ALMA network thematic expert will be responsible for preparing and revising work programmes, and organising network activities (content, priorities, agendas, etc.) in close collaboration with the network coordinator and network partners.

According to specific themes/events/work packages a small task force can be established to act as preparatory group.

Work schedule

Time	Activities/ meetings	Output/Follow-up
March 2024	Preparation ALMA joint meeting network and beneficiaries	Final ALMA work programme 2024 incl. comments/suggestions of network partners
23/24 April 2024	7 th ALMA Network meeting (on-site) Update ongoing activities, start work package “Measuring soft outcomes”; joint session with ALMA beneficiaries including a project visit/project presentation	Summary report
June 2024	8 th ALMA network meeting (on-site) place tbd Update ongoing activities, work package SCO/Delegated Act: Overview on different funding schemes of partners; project visit/project presentation on the second day.	Report (summary, actions planned, next steps) Overview ALMA funding schemes
Summer 2024	Preparatory work for ALMA section/new Website incl. Partner Search Database (new templates), general information, support toolkit etc. Preparation ALMA workshop at SI+ Forum 1-3 October in Brussels	Suggestions for content and draft templates to be used for information provided by partners
2-3 October 2024	SI+ CoP Forum Brussels (on-site) and ALMA workshop (wider audience?)	
22/23 October 2024 (or end September)	9 th ALMA network meeting (online?) presentation and use of new website, update ongoing activities (programmes, work packages and other follow-ups)	Summary report Website with ALMA section is online and working
November 2024	Taking stock and review of activities and work programme 2024, Preparation draft work programme 2025, Preparation draft validation concept	Summary report Draft work programme 2025 Draft validation concept for 2025
1 st week Dec 2024	10 th ALMA network meeting (on-site?) Discussion of draft work programme 2025 comments, amendments, update ongoing activities (programmes, work packages and other follow-ups) Presentation draft validation concept	Summary report Final work programme 2024 Validation concept