



Network Membership Guide

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Section One:

Introduction

Introduction

ERNACT or the European Regions Network for the Application of Communications Technology is an international network for European regions, cities and local areas.

It was formed in 1991 to jointly pursue digital transformation funding, development and transfer of know-how opportunities.

Network members are public service organisations such as city and regional authorities or universities. Members work together to access European Union digital transformation programmes and funding for the benefit of their area, companies and universities.



This document aims to:

1. describe how the ERNACT network operates
2. its governance arrangements
3. its operational model
4. how membership functions
5. the benefits & services provided.

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Section Two:

Governance

Governance Intro

The ERNACT network has established a model for cooperation, at interregional and transnational level, between cities and regions wishing to work together in European Union digital transformation programmes.



An overview of the main elements for governance of the ERNACT network is described on the next page. The detailed responsibilities of the Member Regions and the IMC are set out in Section 4 on 12, while the responsibilities of the ERNACT Office are described in Section 6 on page 24.

Governance

2.1 Interregional Management Committee



Interregional Management Committee (IMC)

This is the management committee of the network made up from representatives of the member regions. The IMC is responsible for overall strategy, management and financial control of the ERNACT network. It meets twice per year.

2.2 Member Regions



Member Regions

These are the individual regions, cities or local authority areas that are members of the ERNACT network. Members can be local, city or regional authorities or a public-sector non-profit organisation or department owned or controlled by the local or regional authority.

2.3 Operational Staff



ERNACT Office

The network's office or secretariat, which delivers the services of the network to members and projects. Legally, this is jointly owned and supervised by Derry City & Strabane District and Donegal County councils. ERNACT staff comprise of:

- General Manager
- Programme/Project Managers
- Administrators
- Communication Officers.

2.4 ERNACT Board



Management

The ERNACT Board manages the ERNACT office and is appointed by Derry City & Strabane District and Donegal County Councils. It meets on average every 6 weeks.

ERNACT is constituted as a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) between the two Councils, which have ultimate legal financial liability.

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Section Three:

Operational Model

3.1 Our Goal: Optimise Co-operation for Innovation

3.1.1 What do we do?



We have developed an approach for optimising cooperation in European projects to meet regions' smart specialisation and digital transformation needs.

We share knowledge by implementing interregional innovative projects related to: digital innovation hubs, artificial intelligence (AI) virtual reality (VR), IoT, public services, smart energy, open innovation, SMEs, tourism, aquaculture, sustainable communities and rural development.

3.1.2 How do we operate?



We research our members' development needs and identify common digital transformation priorities across regions and cities.

With the support from European Union's funding programmes, we prepare project proposals that meet these common needs, capturing the opportunities that interregional partnerships bring.

We also share and disseminate partners' and stakeholders' expertise and coordinate the exchange of experience process through good practices, case studies, services and results.

We also implement pilot projects to ensure that final users benefit from our interregional cooperation efforts.

This process is illustrated in the diagram on the next page.

3.1.3 Our Ethos

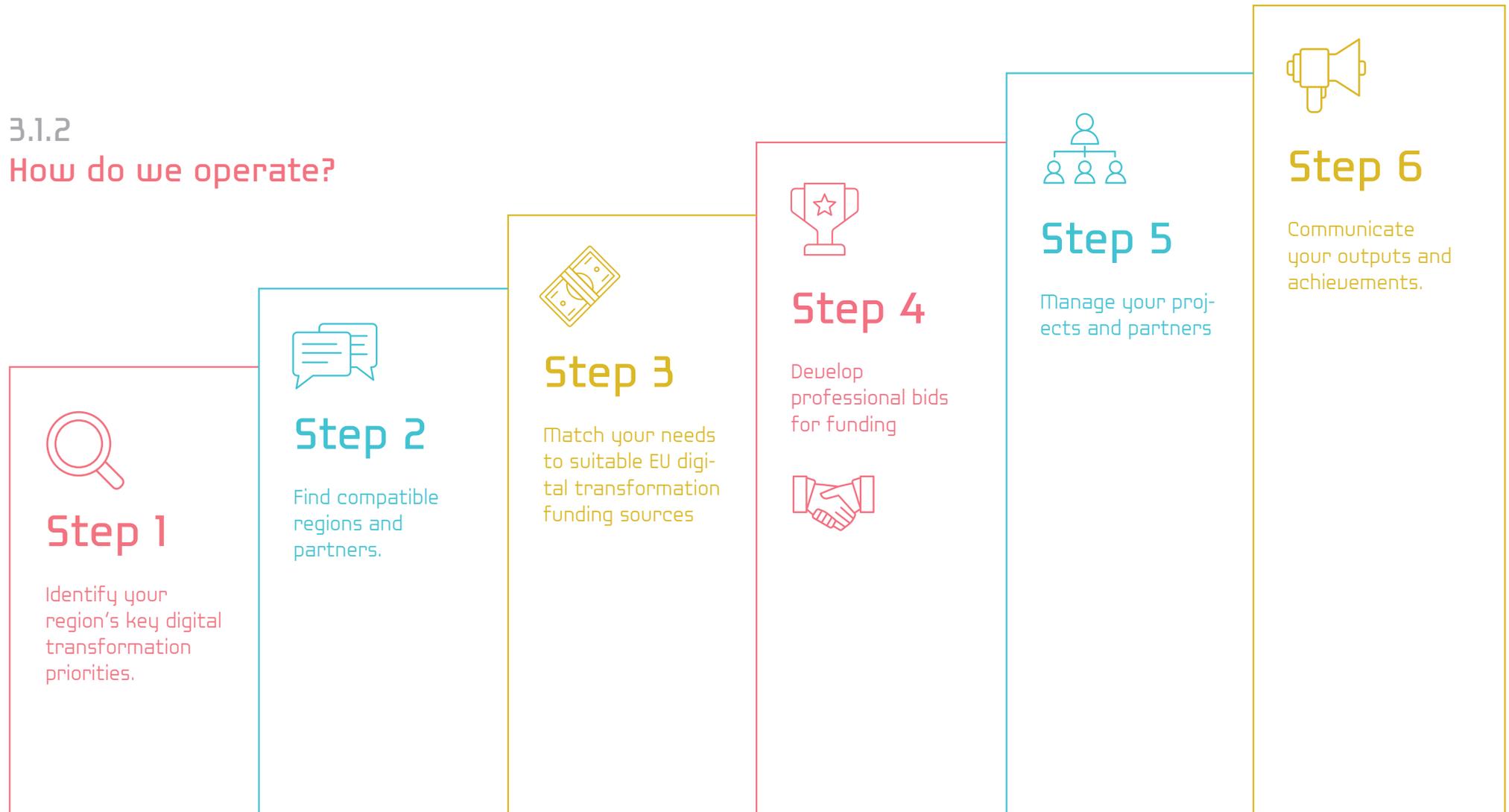


ERNACT actively promotes through digital transformation and project activities and processes:

1. Mutual understanding and dialogue between Europe's regions and their people of their rich and diverse cultures, heritage, language and development perspectives.
2. Positive experience of all persons regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, societal circumstances or level of disability.
3. Foster greener and more sustainable communities in our regions and cities.

3.1.2

How do we operate?



3.2 Financial Management

The ERNACT network, to protect the interests of its members, operates an integrated set of financial processes that meets the highest standards in terms of EU, national and local government standards.



ERNACT agrees and monitors a budget for each year through the IMC.



Internal Financial Procedures are in place in the ERNACT Office.



Annual audited financial accounts are produced (this includes amounts due to ERNACT partner organisations).



An internal audit service is provided by professionals from Derry City & Strabane District and Donegal County councils, with oversight from the audit committees of both Councils.



An actively managed risk register (updated on an annual basis) is maintained.



Staff are experienced and trained in the financial standards and processes required by EU programmes.



Project auditing of all EU projects is carried out by in-country first-level control and EU programme management. This is backed up by various independent project-related systems and financial audits carried out by EU programmes.



An integrated management accounts and project accounting system are used by the ERNACT office.

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Section Four:

Membership Responsibilities, Rules & Protocols

This section sets out the responsibilities of the Member Organisations and the Interregional Management Committee (IMC), as well as arrangements for initiating and managing individual projects.

4.1 Member Organisations

1

Each Member Organisation must appoint two representatives to the IMC. These representatives may be elected local or regional politicians or senior staff of the member organisation. Politicians should be accompanied by senior staff of the member organisation.

2

The member organisation must officially authorise its IMC representatives.

3

Each Member Organisation has one vote in the IMC.

4

Each Member Organisation will attend two IMC meetings per year in a location agreed by the IMC

5

The cost of attendance at IMC meetings will be paid for by the Member Organisation.

6

Member Organisation will do their utmost to positively support and progress the projects and other activities of ERNACT and have due regard to the mutual responsibilities of participation in European Union interregional co-operation projects.

7

Member Organisations must pay all fees to ERNACT approved by the IMC, including the annual membership fee.

8

Member Organisations must give 12 months' notice of their intention to leave the ERNACT network.

4.2 Interregional Management Committee (IMC)

- 1 Organise two IMC meetings per year.
- 2 Strategic management of the ERNACT Network.
- 3 Agree and monitor IMC strategy, priorities, actions and projects.
- 4 Agree the annual budget under which the ERNACT network will operate for the coming year.
- 5 Agree membership fees.
- 6 Initiate strategic initiatives designed to develop the ERNACT Network.
- 7 Establish any committees it deems necessary for the orderly operation of the ERNACT network and projects.
- 8 Authorize two or more regions to submit an application for funding and to carry out any ancillary preparatory work, the management costs of which will be agreed beforehand.

4.3 Projects

- 1 The IMC may authorise any two or more ERNACT Member Organisations to participate in a particular project.
- 2 Member Organisations participating in a project will draw up and agree a consortium agreement for that project.
- 3 The project consortium agreement will take into account any legal or other requirements deemed necessary by the IMC or the EU programme co-funding the project.
- 4 The Member Organisation may authorise the participation of other public or private organisations or companies from their region in a particular project. These partners will be included in the project consortium agreement.
- 5 A project steering group will be established to oversee the implementation of a particular project, ensuring that it meets its aim, objectives, outputs and results.
- 6 Each Member Organisation participating in the project will appoint a competent member of staff to serve on the steering group to be the main point of contact with the IMC and the ERNACT Office.
- 7 The steering committee will agree a programme of work for the project, which may be amended over the life of the project. This will include a project workplan, detailing workpackages, deliverables, activities and responsibilities.
- 8 In recognition of the key part played by co-ordination staff within each region in ensuring timely completion of the project workplan, each project participant will put in place the necessary human resources at the beginning of each project to ensure that the project workplan and dependent activities are completed.
- 9 Project participants will adhere to the regulations, best practice, guidelines, etc., issued by the European Commission Programme, Directorate or EU Officers sponsoring the project.
- 10 The cost of managing a project by the ERNACT office will be divided equally between the participating member regions. This is in recognition of the fact that the effort required to manage a member organisation's participation is not related to the size of their budget.
- 11 Any intellectual property developed as a result of a project will follow the exploitation rules generally accepted within European Union's Framework Programmes and Territorial Cooperation programme.

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Section Five:

Capabilities, Performance & Quality

5.1 Capabilities

The ERNACT network has accumulated extensive experience and knowhow in managing large technology-driven projects, interregional joint working, and helping regions to create innovation services needed to sustain public services, social solidarity and jobs.

The experience amounts to 30 years of involvement in European cooperation projects (mostly as as Lead Partner) in the Territorial Cooperation and Framework programmes.

Additionally, the ERNACT network of members has wide expertise in international networking and the design of transnational systems.

The combination of the experience in transnational technology-led projects and the ability to facilitate transnational cooperation is a key capability.

5.2 Performance

How do we assess the effectiveness and impact of the projects & programmes we pursue and ensure that we are aligned with our members needs?



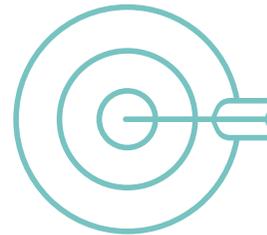
We do this by members and stakeholders involvement at multiple levels:

In developing network strategy, designing network initiatives and project proposals.

Our starting point is to understand our members development and digital transformation needs.

We build project proposals centred on those priorities and harness opportunities for international co-operation and synergy with other regions utilising funding from European Commission programmes.

How do we evaluate the impacts?



We aim to ensure all members can benefit from results of programmes and projects by sharing and disseminating partners' and stakeholders' expertise and coordinating the exchange of experience process via good practices, case studies, services and results, which we publish on the ERNACT website.

Projects typically have appropriate and specific KPI's in their objectives such as, number of Good Practices, regional policy to be influenced and these serve as a performance criteria for the project.

Where there are pilot projects, we seek to ensure that final users benefit from our efforts.

5.3 Quality Management

A quality management system (QMS) is defined as a formalized system that documents processes, procedures, and responsibilities for achieving quality policies and objectives.



5.3.1 Project Quality Management

In ERNACT we apply the Quality Management principles at a project level, either adhering to the required approach of the European Commission or, we apply the project management principles of PRINCE 2 methodology.



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Section Six:

Benefits & Services

The benefits and services that member regions receive are set out on the following pages.

6.1 Benefits



Cost of managing one interregional project included in annual membership fee.



Cost of developing two network project proposals per annum included in annual network fee.



Opportunity to embed and publicise member region's digital transformation needs within the ERNACT Network.



Propose new ERNACT projects.



Propose new regions as members of ERNACT

The acceptance of new member organisations into the ERNACT network must be unanimously approved by all existing Member Organisations.



Option to participate in all ERNACT network projects provided the funding programme's eligibility rules permit.



Receive regular ERNACT contextualised EU digital transformation updates.



Attend Brussels-based digital transformation programme workshops organised by the ERNACT network

6.2 Services

6.2.1

Project Development & Management



1

Develop a minimum of two new project proposals per annum on behalf of the Network (carried out in conjunction with Member regions).

2

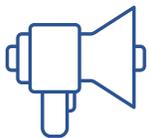
Manage a minimum of one live project on behalf of the IMC.

3

Retain a minimum of two professional, relevantly-trained and experienced staff members and one support staff to support operation of the network.

6.2.2

Communications & Digital Transformation Programmes



1

Organise two ERNACT management meetings per annum in conjunction with a member region (or, when directed by the IMC, as part on a Digital Agenda conference, workshop or other suitable event or venue).

2

Monitor all EU Digital Agenda related programmes and report developments to members on a regular basis.

3

Carry out bi-annual mission to Brussels-based digital transformation project officers to ascertain latest developments.

4

Liaise with the European Commission on all matters relating to the development of ERNACT and its projects.

6.2 Services

6.2.3 Financial Management



1

Present a draft budget for the network to the IMC on an annual basis.

2

Provide bi-annual updates to the IMC in relation to actual costs versus budgets.

3

Provide audited accounts to the IMC on an annual basis.

4

Provide access of authorized partner staff to ERNACT financial and management accounting information.

6.2.4 Additional Services



1

Carry out management of further projects if directed by the IMC.

2

Provide additional project management resources as directed by the IMC.

3

Recruit additional staff to assist project management of additional projects.

4

Advise the IMC of any specialist project development expertise required for a particular EU programme and the cost thereof.

5

Carryout any further tasks or initiatives agreed by the IMC.

6.3 ERNACT Office

This section describes the ERNACT office, and related matters, located in the Irish North West Crossborder area.

6.3.1 Office



ERNACT's office is located in the CoLab, a digital innovation hub, owned by and located on the campus of the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) in County Donegal in Ireland.

This helps ensure that the organisation is at the centre of the latest innovations in the on-going digital revolution.

6.3.2 Board



The ERNACT Board manages the ERNACT office and is appointed by Derry City & Strabane District and Donegal County Councils. It meets on average every 6 weeks.

Legally, the Board is constituted through a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) between the two Councils, which have ultimate legal financial liability for ERNACT.

6.3.3 Staff



ERNACT staff comprise of:

- General Manager
- Programme/Project Managers
- Administrators
- Communication Officers.

The number of staff is adjusted to reflect the anticipated level of projects in a particular budget year.

6.3.4 Computer Services & Security



All of ERNACT's computer services – including intranet, mail, databases, web sites, files – are based on Cloud Services model and are protected to the highest national and international public sector standards.

6.3 ERNACT Office

6.3.5 Internet Organisation & Software Systems



ERNACT has developed a unique set of systems and services suited to its role as a European network of public authorities involved in multi-project and multi-organisational operations. The most important of these are:

1

A project collaboration system (TeamWorker) that enables ERNACT to efficiently carry out its network and project management functions, including event management, team management, workplan tracking, news dissemination, funding calls.

2

Project Costing System designed especially for European projects.

3

Various software tools to facilitate development of new project proposals in an efficient and methodical manner.

4

Computerised accounts, e-banking, payroll and government requirements processing.

5

Integrated re-use of project collaboration information across website, social media channels.

6

Use of professional digital media tools within an integrated digital communications strategy to promote the work of the network and its partners.



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