

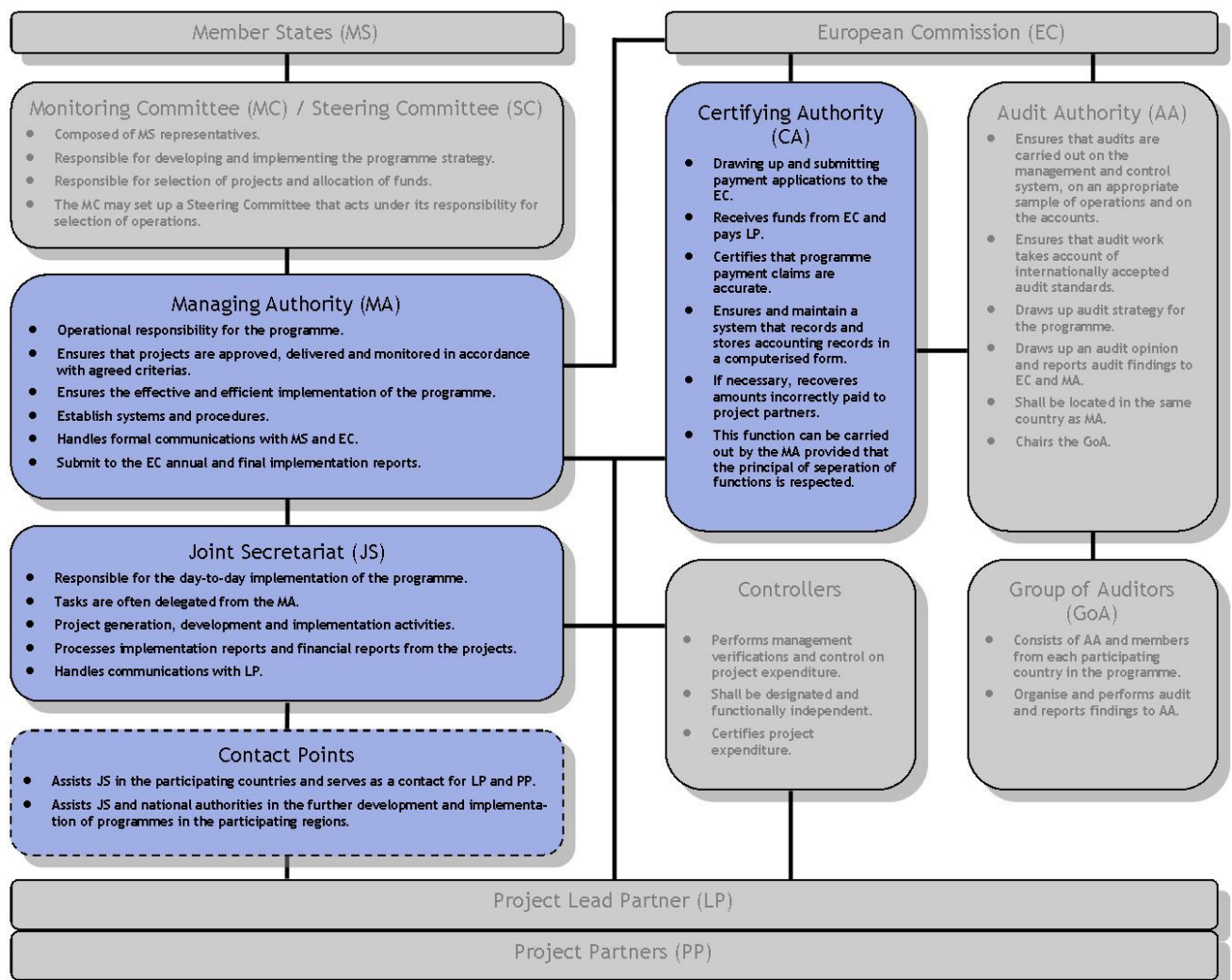


The 2014-2020 Interreg Programme Management Handbook is composed of fact sheets. Each theme is covered by one fact sheet so that the reader can easily and quickly choose the relevant fact sheet.

## Fact Sheet; Management and Implementation Bodies

### 1. What is it? What is the definition of the term / theme of this fact sheet?

The management and implementation bodies in Interreg programmes consist of the Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Certifying Authority and Contact Points.



### Managing Authority

The Managing Authority (MA) is the operationally-responsible body of the programme. It ensures the effective and efficient implementation of the programme, and delivers the programme strategy in accordance with preset quality standards. The MA therefore takes the lead in establishing systems and procedures, and ensures that these are maintained. The MA usually handles the more formal communications ‘upwards’ to the Member States and the European Commission (EC).



## Joint Secretariat

The Joint Secretariat (JS) is the body responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the programme; its tasks are often carried out under the responsibility of the Managing Authority. The JS is usually specialised in all communication ‘down’ to the project level and in processing the reporting information received from the projects.

## Certifying Authority

The Certifying Authority (CA) is the body responsible for submitting certified statements of expenditure to the Commission, and for ensuring eligibility with EU, national and programme rules. The CA sometimes also verifies the quality of the verifications carried out by JS desk officers and, on a sample basis, checks the correctness of the reports from the beneficiaries.

The CA ensures that the statement of expenditure is accurate, results from reliable accounting systems, and is based on verifiable supporting documentation and that the expenditure declared complies with applicable EU-, Programme- and National Rules.

## Contact Points

Contact Points, or national Contact Points, are a resource that many programmes use in order to help promote the programme. The Contact Points assist the JS and national authorities in the further development and implementation of programmes in the regions. Contact Points help the programme secure the link between the transnational and national/regional level in programme implementation, and sometimes serve as the first point of contact for project applicants and partners in the respective countries.

## 2. Why we are discussing it?

Setting up properly functioning management and implementation bodies is the basis for a successful programme implementation. Moreover, as clear procedures, division of roles and responsibilities, and defining ways of communication between the bodies are crucial for smooth co-operation towards programme implementation, they should be established as soon as possible.

### Managing Authority

The Managing Authority is responsible for the functions laid down in Article 125 of Regulation (EU) No 1303 /2013. This includes, in addition to what has already been mentioned, *“making available to intermediate bodies and beneficiaries information that is relevant to the execution of their tasks...”* and *“ensure that selected operations falls within the scope of the Fund or Funds concerned...”*. The MA bears the main responsibility of the programme. This responsibility covers, for example, reporting any decisions amending the elements of the cooperation programme to the European Commission. The MA ensures that projects are approved, delivered and monitored in accordance with the criteria of the programme. The Managing Authority must also ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the Project Lead Partner. Project Partners must repay to the Project Lead Partner any amounts unduly paid. However, reports on a programme’s progress towards its spending and indicators tend to be tasks completed with the assistance of the JS.

Furthermore, the Managing Authority must, in accordance with Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], satisfy itself that the expenditure of each project partner participating in an operation has been verified by a designated controller.



Some new elements have been introduced for the 2014-2020 period. The largest change is that the MA now can take over the responsibilities and function of the CA. However, there must still be a clear separation of functions.

### Joint Secretariat

According to the ETC regulation 1299/2013 (ETC) the Managing Authority must “*set up a joint secretariat which should, inter alia, provide information to applicants for support, deal with project applications and assist beneficiaries in implementing their operations*”.

Article 23.2 of the ETC regulation states that “*The joint secretariat shall assist the managing authority and the monitoring committee in carrying out their respective functions. The joint secretariat shall also provide information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under cooperation programmes and shall assist beneficiaries in the implementation of operations.*” It is therefore good practice if a JS is located close to the MA to facilitate communication between the two bodies and towards other programme bodies such as Lead Partners of projects and the Monitoring Committee (MC). Most JS responsibilities are delegated from the MA.

The JS provides the project applicants and project partner with guidance and support in the application process and project-related matters. The Joint Secretariat processes implementation reports and finance reports from the projects, both from a content perspective and from a financial perspective. The central role of the JS in project development, however, varies too much between programmes to be defined in standard terms. For the 2014-2020 programme period, the terminology for this programme body was changed from Joint Technical Secretariat to Joint Secretariat, to emphasise its less technical and more strategic role in the cooperation context.

### Certifying Authority

The core function of the Certifying Authority remains more or less the same as in the previous programme period, 2007-2013; namely, to draw up and submit to the Commission certified statements of expenditure. A certification by the CA means that the statements of expenditure are accurate, result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documentation, and that expenditure declared complies with applicable rules.

Another function of the CA is to review processes and procedures by those implementing the programme; serving as an independent quality assurance body. The CA will also ensure that any irregularities are raised and addressed.

The Certifying Authority is responsible for the functions laid down in Article 126 of Regulation (EU) No 1303 /2013. In addition to what has already been mentioned, this includes; “*taking account when drawing up and submitting payment applications of the results of all audits carried out by, or under the responsibility of, the audit authority*” and “*ensuring that there is a system which records and stores, in computerised form, accounting records for each operation...*”

The CA will also maintain accounting records of the expenditure declared to the European Commission (EC) in computerised form, and keep accounts of all amounts recoverable and withdrawn from the operational programmes.



## Contact Points

Setting up Contact Points is not a regulatory requirement, and each programme and its MS need to decide whether to establish such structures or not. The main responsibilities of the Contact Points are usually outlined in the main programme documents (e.g., co-operation programme) and include providing assistance to projects applicants/partners during the project generation, application and implementation phases in the respective partner states.

### 3. Reference to the regulations and what is new in the 2014-2020 programming period compared with the 2007-2013 programming period

Legislative framework:

- EC Regulation 1303/2013, (CPR):
  - Art 122: Responsibilities of Member States
  - Art 123 (6): Designation of Certifying Authority
  - Art 124: Procedure for the designation of the Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority
  - Art 125: Functions of the Managing Authority
  - Art 126: Functions of Certifying Authority
  - Art 131: Payment applications
  - Art 132: Payment to the beneficiaries
  - Art 133: Use of the euro
  - Art 135: Deadlines for presentation of interim payment applications and for their payment
  - Art 137: Preparation of the accounts
  - Annex XIII: Designation criteria for the Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority
- EC Regulation 1299/2013 (ETC):
  - Art 23: Functions of the Managing Authority
  - Art 23.2: Functions of the Joint Secretariat
- EC Implementing Regulation 1010/2014, (IR), Annex III:
  - 3.2 Organisation of the Certifying Authority
- EU Regulation 966/2012, Financial Regulation
  - Art 59: Shared management with Member States
- EC Guidance for Member States on Designation Procedure (EGESIF\_14\_0013-final)

### 4. Challenges and frequently-asked questions

- How to organise the CA function - as a part of the MA or as a separate body?
- Will we use Contact Points or not?
- How to delegate the tasks between MA and JS in the most efficient way?



## 5. How they are addressed and how does it work in practise?

During the 2014-2020 programming period the CA may be organised as part of MA, providing separation of functions is ensured. The respective staff should have clear job descriptions with detailed responsibilities towards CA and MA tasks; for example, a person certifying payment claims should not be involved in the approval of claims.

Establishing Contact Points may be considered in programmes of broader geographical area, if it is considered useful to have Contact Points supporting applicants at their regions and in their local language, as JS may have limited resources in terms of TA restrictions and / or linguistic limitations. Moreover, Contact Points may have a more local perspective on the regional needs and challenges to be overcome by cross-border co-operation. Such knowledge and experience may be of value during project idea development.

### Managing Authority

The main functions and responsibilities of the Managing Authority include:

- Being responsible for the implementation and sound financial management of the programme
- Ensuring the programme's compliance with EU-, programme- and national rules
- Being responsible for implementing and maintaining procedures during programme implementation
- Providing relevant information to the Commission and other programme bodies
- Submitting annual and final implementation reports to the EC
- Ensuring that the projects selected for funding match the programme's operational criteria
- Assuring that co-financed products and services are delivered efficiently and according to the rules
- Recording and storing accounts, and ensuring a clear audit trail
- Ensuring that the programme is properly evaluated in terms of performance and delivery
- Overseeing the quality of the first level control process

### Joint Secretariat

The main functions and responsibilities of the Joint Secretariat include:

- Assisting the Managing Authority (MA), the Monitoring Committee (MC), the Steering Committee (SC) and the Audit Authority (AA) in carrying out their respective functions
- Preparing and providing all necessary information to allow the MA and CA to fulfil their responsibilities
- Providing information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities
- Assisting beneficiaries in the implementation of operations
- Coordinating and interacting with the programme's contact points to develop and promote the programme
- Monitoring the progress of ongoing projects, including financial progress, by assessing and evaluating progress reports
- Assisting project applicants in the development of project ideas
- Giving technical, content and financial advice to project beneficiaries and project applicants
- Facilitating and stimulating the development of projects
- Organizing and coordinating calls for proposals
- Assisting with the meetings of the MC and the SC by preparing the agenda, preparing documents and material for the meetings, and distributing documents prior to the meetings to the members of the MC or SC



## **Certifying Authority**

Specific responsibilities of certifying authorities include:

- Certifying compatibility of expenditure with national and EU rules and criteria
- Drawing up and submitting payment applications to the EC
- Receiving funds from EC and submitting funds to the Lead Beneficiary
- Ensuring sufficient information is received from the relevant Managing Authorities to support their claims
- Taking account of audit reports
- Ensuring and maintaining a system that records and stores accounting records in computerised form
- Maintaining computerised records
- Keeping account of unused/recovered funds to be returned to the Commission
- If necessary, recovering amounts incorrectly paid to project partners

## **Contact Points**

Examples of the main activities of some of the existing contact points include:

- Stimulating project generation process
- Providing technical support to the project applicants during the project application process
- Supporting the JTS in monitoring the progress made by projects during the implementation phase
- Capitalising project results in the respective national context

## **6. Reference to other, more-detailed papers**

- Fact sheet: Strategic Bodies
- Fact sheet: Audit and Control bodies
- EC Implementing Regulation 1010/2014, (IR), Annex III:
- EU Regulation 966/2012, Financial Regulation
- EC Guidance for Member States on Designation Procedure (EGESIF\_14\_0013-final)