

## **SEE 2030 Strategy Programming Guidelines**

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of these Programming Guidelines is to outline the programming process of the SEE 2030 Strategy, define the methodology for identification and prioritisation of interventions and outline roles and responsibilities of the programming stakeholders in the SEE 2030 Strategy context.

Programming process represents the link between the SEE 2030 Strategy, as the basis for intervention, and the actual implementation. It is foreseen that one programming cycle last two years and new cycle starts after each biannual update. Each biannual programming cycle will result in regional projects to convert the priorities and objectives of the SEE 2030 Strategy into tangible regional, plurilateral or bilateral actions. The programming guidelines will be applicable for the entire period of SEE 2030 implementation, starting in November 2021 and will be updated whenever necessary to reflect any changes in the priorities of SEE 2030 following its regular biannual updates.

The overall programming process will be carried out in partnership between the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat and the SEECF Participants represented by National SEE 2030 Coordinators and, where appropriate, line ministries and agencies of SEECF Participants, and other regional organisations in SEE. SEE 2030 programming will put in place a consultative process in which all relevant perspectives should be heard and reflected in the resulting regional actions. An elaborate coordination system is established to enable the flow of information between the RCC, National Coordinators, private sector, civil society, academia, international and regional organisations, donor community and other stakeholders who play a critical role in ensuring sound programming and success in implementation. The SEE 2030 Strategy Monitoring Committee's approval is required to determine the selection criteria to identify the counterparts in multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms which are foreseen by the SEE 2030 Strategy. National Coordinators and their offices are involved throughout the process to ensure complementarity between national and regional strategies and provide a feedback loop with the on-going SEECF participant -level implementation of SDGs and the Agenda 2030 with bilateral donors and social partners/stakeholders.

The overall facilitation of the programming process will be the responsibility of the RCC, while the SEE 2030 Strategy Monitoring Committee, composed of National Coordinators and other two delegates representing each SEECF Participant as described by the Strategy, shall oversee and guide the process. The RCC Secretariat has the direct duty to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are included into the process and kept regularly informed about the progress and all steps are taken prior to the final approval of regional actions. The RCC Secretariat will help coordinate the process of raising funds for the prioritised regional actions, as multiple sources of funding are envisioned, including national budgets, statutory budget of the RCC, multilateral and bilateral donors, private sector, and international organisations and financial institutions.

This document is to describe the main programming cycles and to propose a set of selection and eligibility criteria for prioritising regional actions, including the forms that these actions can take.

In this context, it needs to be highlighted that the main objective of the SEE 2030 programming is to assist the governments of South East Europe achieve the 2030 targets through measurable and result-oriented regional interventions that will enable sustainable economic growth shared by all.

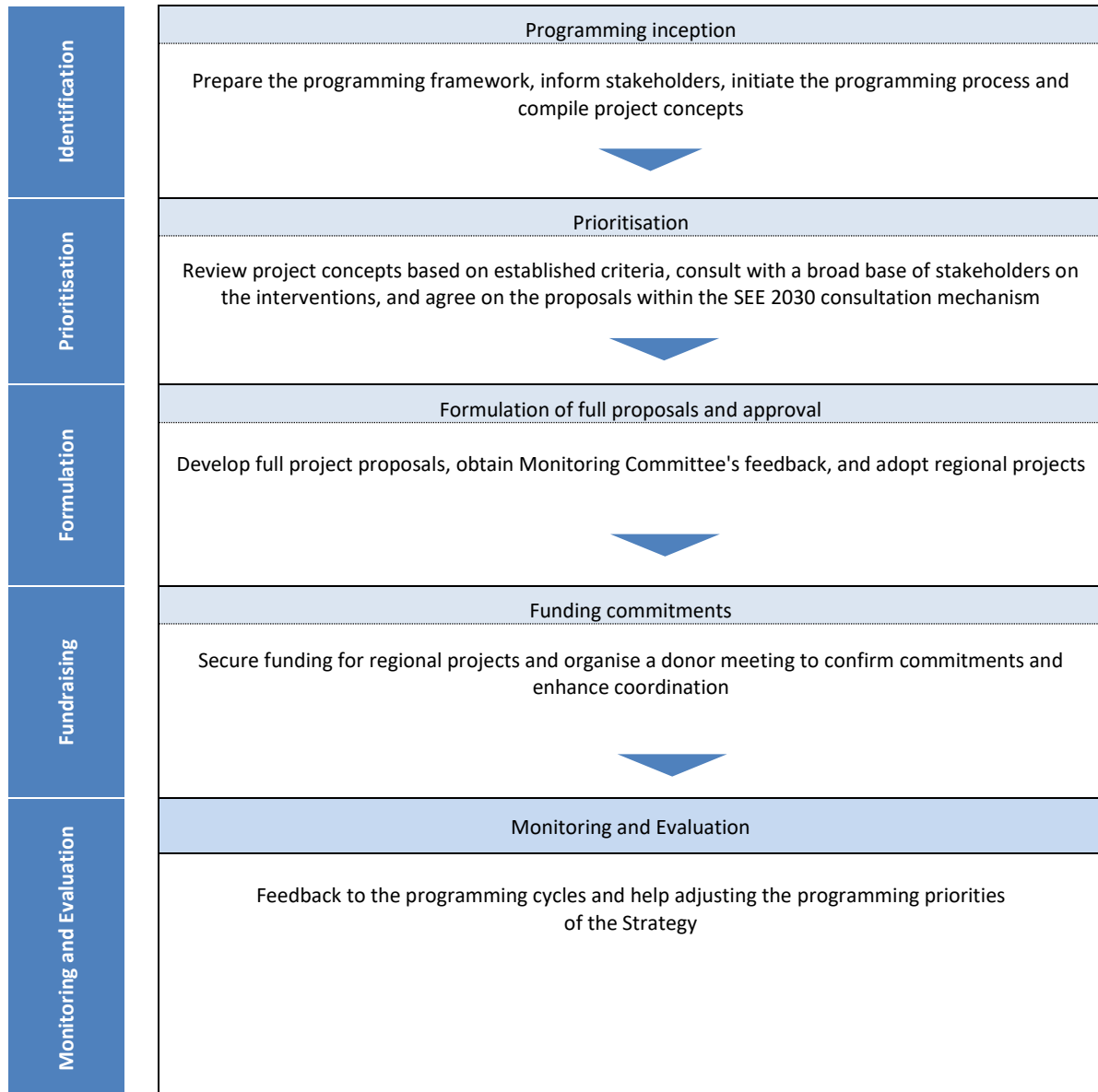
## 2. Programming Process

The SEE 2030 Programming process envisages several stages in programming to ensure that the end result of the process – the SEE 2030 programming document – is best aligned with the priorities and objectives of the SEE 2030 Strategy and the needs of the SEE region and SEECF Participants. The objective of the programming process is to establish a cycle to cluster the actions foreseen by the SEE 2030 Strategy in accordance with the priorities and objectives of the Strategy, and to facilitate undertaking concrete actions by the SEECF Participants through regional programmes and projects implemented in line with the instruments of assistance defined by the Strategy. The stages of the programming process include:

- (i) **Identification of project concepts** as the inception phase of the programming exercise. RCC will compile and identify project concepts through a consultative process that engages the National SEE 2030 Coordinators (and line ministries and agencies through existing SEECF participant-level coordination mechanisms), private sector representatives, the academia, donors and international and regional organisations, and financial institutions. To be considered within the programming process, the project concepts will need to address, at a minimum, the rationale for the project within the SEE 2030 context, the project's objectives, expected results, estimated resources required and identification of potential funding sources. If agreed by the Committee, RCC Secretariat will also have the liberty to propose project concepts in this stage.
- (ii) **Prioritisation of projects** as the second phase of the programming process to confirm alignment of the project concepts with the Strategy and its priorities. The methodology for prioritisation of project concepts will be based on the selection and eligibility criteria agreed by the Monitoring Committee and may be revised as deemed necessary by the Committee.
- (iii) **Development of full proposals** for prioritised projects through collaborative effort with the project originators, prospective implementers and other stakeholders. The full proposal will contain the necessary elements for successful project implementation and roll out, such as: project purpose, stakeholder analysis, goals, specific objectives, method, detailed outline of necessary resources, and anticipated impact. Where necessary and possible, technical assistance can be sought to elaborate full project proposals.
- (iv) **Fundraising** to ensure that project proposals are appropriately resourced to enable the success of the project and the achievement of desired impact. While fundraising represents the final stage of project preparation, the potential funding sources for the project during the project conceptualisation stage will be proposed to the Monitoring Committee by the RCC in consultation with the stakeholders proposing project concepts, to maximise the efficiency of the programming process, ensure eligibility and secure alignment with funding source priorities. RCC will assist in coordinating the fundraising process.
- (v) **Monitoring and Evaluation** results reported by (future) projects and overall implementation of the SEE 2030 will provide valuable feedback to the programming cycles and help adjusting the programming priorities of the Strategy. Wherever appropriate, thematic reports,

instruments, guidelines, reviews and other tools developed by international organisations will also be benefited as information sources for monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 1: Overview of programming stages



The SEE2030 Monitoring Committee will steer the programming process, with the RCC Secretariat coordinating and facilitating the effort. The SEE 2030 Monitoring Committee is established with the intention of closely involving the authorities of SEECF Participants in the decision-making process. The Monitoring Committee would be composed of National Coordinators at Assistant Minister or State Secretary level or their designates and two other delegates – one of which may represent the policy side of SDGs implementation in the given SEECF Participant and other from national statistical authority. Given National Coordinator’s unique role and horizontal overview in the implementation of SEE 2030, their (offices) participation in the Committee is instrumental to guarantee clear regional

ownership of the regional projects, as well as to ensure complementarities between SEE 2030 and national strategies. RCC will serve as a secretariat to the Monitoring Committee.

The Committee would meet to review and approve the regional projects using **the following selection criteria (proposed by the RCC)**:

- **Relevance and policy integration** - areas of intervention which transcend the boundaries of established policy fields and respond to one or more strategic objectives of SEE 2030 Strategy such as: (i) Poverty reduction, (ii) Women empowerment, (iii) Improvement of social inclusion, (iv) Countering population decline through quality-of-life related interventions, and (v) Just transitions in green and digital without undermining competitiveness and private sector development.
- **Private sector orientation** – areas of intervention that directly involve private sector actors in implementation and/or co-financing, such as: inbound and outbound multimodal and green logistics in intra SEE trade or between SEE and its neighbouring regions, value chain creation, private sector participation in green infrastructure development, innovative regional financial and professional services and other interventions that cut across policy areas including trade, customs, transport, finance and others.
- **People-first focus** – interventions that create “value for people”, with a focus on the region’s most vulnerable. Integrating considerations of resilience, sustainability and circularity, this screening criteria should ensure key people-first outcomes, such as access and equity, economic effectiveness, and environmental sustainability and resilience. People-first approach shall remain a key qualitative preferential treatment throughout the SEE 2030 programming process.
- **Donor priority alignment** – interventions that allow for existing donor priorities and programmes. The interventions should consider the geographic focus of development cooperation partners, along with the thematic focus of programmes and types of beneficiaries supported. This requires continuous and regular communication/consultation with donor community and ensuring their close involvement throughout the programming cycle of the SEE 2030 Strategy.
- **Stakeholder engagement** – project proposals generated through extensive communication and consultation with multiple stakeholders, including the potential beneficiaries and civil society actors. Regional interventions should take into consideration the different interests and values stakeholders have and address them throughout the project cycle, from the design stage through the implementation.
- **Long-term vision** – a basic principle of sustainable development is to balance the needs of current and future generations. This inter-generational perspective is highlighted in the text of 2030 Agenda, and is considered by most participants in their SDG national strategic frameworks. Managing potential trade-offs between short and long-term priorities is a key element for enhancing policy coherence.<sup>1</sup> Project proposals should therefore have long-term

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<sup>1</sup> OECD (2018), “Applying the eight building blocks of PCSD in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda”

vision explaining how short- and long-term priorities are balanced, and their impact is to be sustained.

- **Policy coordination** – addressing highly interconnected SDGs effectively requires coordination mechanism to allow public sector authorities and other key stakeholders to share information, define and efficiently allocate responsibility and resources for implementation.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the SEE 2030 Strategy Monitoring Committee should avail itself to create any sub-structures to facilitate regional coordination in thematic areas of interventions, wherever appropriate. Project proposals are also expected to explain what types of challenge in policy coordination are foreseen and how these challenges could be mitigated.

Furthermore, streamlining the programming priorities of financial assistance among Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligible SEECP participants towards UN SDGs would considerably increase the impact of SEE 2030 Strategy interventions. Supporting further alignment of donor-financed assistance programmes with SEECP Participant-level priorities related to SDG implementation as well as with the objectives of the SEE 2030 Strategy should remain one of the key features of the SEE 2030 programming process.

The SEE 2030 Strategy also envisages a number of Instruments of Assistance for the implementation of the Strategy. The programming process shall ensure that any and all interventions proposed under the SEE 2030 framework are in conformance with the instruments laid out in the Strategy.

Therefore, in assessing eligibility and prioritising areas of intervention under the SEE 2030 framework, the Monitoring Committee will apply a two-dimensional axis assessing conformity of intervention areas with (i) Development Cooperation Effectiveness principles and (ii) SEE 2030 Instruments of Assistance.

i. **Development Cooperation Effectiveness** principles will take into account the following areas:

- SDGs related priorities of SEECP participants verified through national voluntary reviews of the implementation of SDGs and the Agenda 2030
- Policy areas supported by the donor community verified by the OECD DAC data<sup>3</sup> and regularly updated through communication and coordination with the development assistance community in the SEE
- SDG-related areas presently not addressed by the existing development assistance support and needing renewed focus from development cooperation partners, based on clear justification and alignment with SEE 2030 objectives.

All regional projects will need to be screened against the Development Cooperation Effectiveness principles above to ensure that the interventions are eligible for support needed to achieve the desired outcomes.

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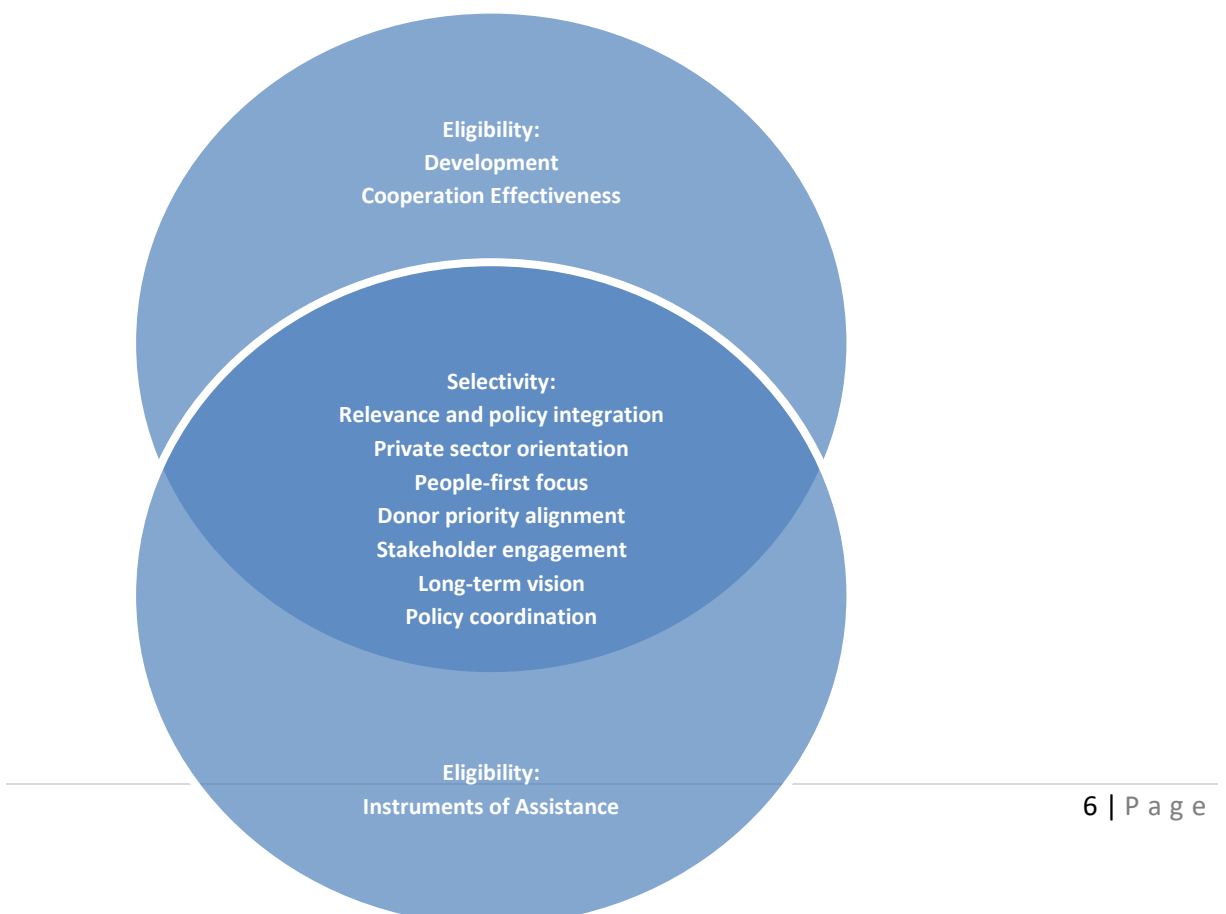
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Please note that the OECD's ODA data is available with a 1-year lag.

- ii. **Instruments of Assistance** will be another eligibility criteria where the proposed interventions will be screened for compliance with one or more instruments foreseen by the SEE 2030 Strategy:
- Low-cost assistance instruments implemented over the short-to-medium term, including: (i) Regional dialogue, (ii) Regional networking, (iii) Actions of regional solidarity and assistance (bilateral or multilateral assistance supported by SEE development agencies), (iv) Peer reviews (bilateral or multilateral assistance supported by SEE development agencies).
  - Medium-cost assistance instruments implemented over the medium-to-long term, such as International technical assistance supported by regional or international donors, with involvement of the private sector, where possible.
  - High-cost interventions implemented over the long-term, such as International Financial Institutions (IFIs) support in selected areas with demonstrable investment feasibility and bankability of projects.

In summary, the SEE 2030 programming process would apply two eligibility criteria (Development Cooperation Effectiveness and Instruments of Assistance) and seven selectivity criteria (Relevance and policy integration, Private sector orientation, People-first focus, Donor priority alignment, Stakeholder engagement, Long-term vision, and Policy coordination) in selecting and prioritising SEE 2030 interventions.

Figure 2: SEE 2030 Programming Assessment Framework



### **3. Conclusion:**

RCC will guide every stage of programming process with full coordination and consultation with the SEECF participants through the SEE 2030 Monitoring Committee to ensure that the set out eligibility and selection criteria are met successfully. The programming process will commence once the Monitoring Committee approves the programming selection and eligibility criteria. As mentioned above, both groups of criteria would be amended according to the SEE 2030 Strategy biannual updates, if necessary.

The stages mentioned in Part 2 will have biannual cycles. A new biannual cycle of the programming will be initiated after each update of the SEE 2030 Strategy. Each biannual cycle will be completed with a multilateral fundraising meeting.

For the period of 2021-2023 RCC proposes the selection and eligibility criteria as above.

Upon their approval by the Monitoring Committee, the RCC Secretariat will launch the Programming Inception phase during which the programming framework is to be prepared through communication with stakeholders and compilation of their project concepts.

### Annex I: Programming-related timeline

Action	Taken by:	Addressee:	Time (Tentative)
Guidelines for project proposals in the identification phase based on the assessment criteria	RCC Secretariat	SEECP Participants	November 2021- January 2022
Programming identification (collecting project proposals)	SEECP Participants (Public Sector), Private Sector, CSOs and other stakeholders	RCC Secretariat	Continuous (starting from February 2022)
Development Cooperation Effectiveness and Donor Coordination	RCC Secretariat (in open communication with SEECP Participants)	Donor Community	November 2022 – May 2022
Prioritisation and Formulation	Monitoring Committee with the support of RCC Secretariat	Donor Community	April 2022 – June 2022
Fund Raising (Donor Conference)	RCC Secretariat	SEECP Participants	June 2022 – November 2022