

European Competence Centre for Social Innovation  
ALMA network

# The 2024 Work Programme

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## Objectives of the ALMA network

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The ALMA network was established on the 28 September 2022 as the successor of the TLN Mobility Network<sup>1</sup> with the objective to:

- support Member States (hereinafter 'MS') and regions launching ALMA<sup>2</sup> calls under their national and regional ESF+ Programmes 2021-2027,
- encourage more MS and regions to participate in ALMA.

The network's 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 projects: measuring soft outcomes/soft indicators, taking forward Simplified Cost Options (hereinafter 'SCO'), validation concept for mobility projects, etc.
- Reach in out to a wider audience with information sessions about the state of play regarding national/regional ALMA mobility projects and activities of the ALMA network, in order to promote ALMA and encourage more MS and regions to implement this initiative.
- Providing support for the central ALMA call directly implemented and managed in 2023/2024 by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation, as an additional strand for ALMA projects.

The ALMA network is organised and supported by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation under the ESF+ Social Innovation+ Initiative.

## ALMA network partners

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The Core group<sup>3</sup> of the ALMA network are Managing Authorities (hereinafter 'MA') and Implementing Bodies (hereinafter 'IB') at national and regional levels who are currently implementing or planning to implement ALMA measures under their national or regional ESF+ Programmes 2021-2027.

The Extended group<sup>4</sup> comprises MAs/IBs who might be still undecided or want to implement ALMA later in the current ESF+ period, as well as other relevant stakeholders involved in the ALMA initiative. With this group the network will promote information sessions and various events.

The third and separate group are the Beneficiaries of the ALMA Central Call (29 projects)<sup>5</sup> at EU level which the network will support with transnational partner search activities and learning/training sessions.

## Proposed activities and outputs (results)

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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 projects.

In 2023, the network's activities focused on key areas of the ALMA initiative (e.g. transnational cooperation, finance/SCO, target group, etc.), giving a first overview on existing good practices and identifying challenges to be addressed in the future.

1 More information is available at <https://www.esf.de/portal/EN/Funding-period-2014-2020/TLN-Mobility/content.html>

2 More information is available at <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1549&langId=en>

3 In 2024, the Core group has 37 members from 17 MS (BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, HR, IT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).

4 In 2024, the Extended group has 16 members from 13 MS (CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, RO).

5 The list of signed Grant Agreements ALMA Call is [available at ESFA website](#)

### Key findings:

- There is still a need to point out the difference between ALMA and ERASMUS+ in terms of objective, target group, and project structure.
- The definition of 'most vulnerable NEETs' varies across Member States and regions due to differences in labour market factors, educational systems, etc., and must be defined by partners at regional level.
- The EU Delegated Act for ALMA does not fit for all target groups, therefore Member States and regions are free to define their own funding model for ALMA.

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

Topics	Activities/Outputs
<b>Updates on national/regional and central ALMA call</b> Survey update on national/regional ALMA calls as basis for the online EU-map.	Creation of an online EU map where all ALMA calls in Europe are visible with some key information and links to relevant websites (in conjunction with the new SI+ website currently developed by ESFA).
<b>Finance/Use of SCO/EU Delegated Act</b> Calculation, legal basis, application of the EU Delegated Act to national/regional calls and projects, potential amendments, activities to be covered, audit of costs incurred in foreign countries, etc.	Discussion of different kinds of funding schemes (DA, different SCO, real costs, or a mix of both), defining budget for projects, eligibility of activities, sharing (different) practices, etc. Overview ALMA funding schemes: => link to EC, TN Simplification.
<b>Most vulnerable NEETs</b> Definition, outreach, challenges. Complex term comprising a range of different groups, also depending on labour market factors => the concept needs to be defined at regional level in view of the differences between regions even within the same Member State.	Focus on social inclusion. Presentation by partners of their specific target groups for ALMA and discussion of specific questions partners may have when drafting calls.
<b>Launching/ drafting calls</b> Explanation of differences between ALMA and other mobility programmes (ERASMUS+), programme cycle and project cycle, support tools, practical guidance (step-by-step), incl. challenges and potential solutions (finding suitable project operators).	Focus on network partners starting work on calls in 2024, forum to discuss challenges, sharing good practices, mutual support (e.g. mentoring schemes/ tandems), etc. Scheme with ALMA specific key elements (framework, timeline, application process, selection criteria, support to projects, etc.).
<b>Transnational Cooperation</b> Finding transnational partners and foreign companies, practical aspects of organising the stay abroad and placement, risk management, etc.	Support tools (TCA, Partner Search Database) Many good examples (ALMA Handbook, etc.). Sharing/presenting good practices, learning sessions, mapping legal conditions for the work-related learning experience (internships) in Member States and regions, etc.
<b>National cooperation</b> Partnership, involvement PES, companies, local stakeholders, etc.	Sharing good practices, addressing specific questions partners may have, etc.
<b>Evaluation/Assessment</b> ALMA specific and ESF+ indicators, selection criteria, monitoring of projects and follow-up achievements, etc.	Not yet started. Collecting/checking existing material and practices, work package 'Measuring soft outcomes', presentation 'EU-study', link to Community of Practice on Employment, Education and Skills.

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

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

Measuring 'the distance travelled' by participants can demonstrate the impact of mobility measures. There are several tested tools available as well as the *Study on the pathways to enhance the use of programme-specific indicators in the ESF and ESF+<sup>6</sup>* published by EC in April 2022 and including soft indicators to be built upon.

- **Validation of ALMA projects/calls** => starting end of 2024

The idea is to provide clear data for the benefits of the ALMA initiative and show the results of different approaches.

A validation concept could cover the following 4 categories:

- Added value for participants/NEETs with special focus on informal skills and competences (*programme impact*) => *also linked to the work package of measuring soft outcomes/soft indicators.*
- Factors that explain the causal effects of the projects, especially the added value of provided support during the preparation and post-mobility phases (*programme impact*).
- Impact on national implementation by partners/project partners (*network impact*).
- Added value of ALMA network.

It could start with a meta-evaluation looking at ALMA calls at national/regional/EU-level and their evaluation results or plans. This will be followed by qualitative interviews with evaluators and ALMA partners.

It is important to underline that validation means collecting results and drawing conclusions, not comparing them or rating projects. 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 Social Innovation Forum including an ALMA network workshop:

#### **6<sup>th</sup> meeting 23/24 April 2024 in Malaga (on-site) – joint meeting with the Beneficiaries of ALMA Central Call**

- Internal network meeting with updates on/about the ongoing activities (mobility programmes, work packages, and other follow-ups).
- Discussion on different kinds of funding schemes, overview of the funding schemes of existing ALMA calls.
- Content of ALMA network section of the new SI+ platform (general information, EU-map, PSD etc.)
- Joint session with the Beneficiaries of ALMA Central Call.
- Project visit/project presentation.

#### **7<sup>th</sup> meeting 26/27 June 2024 in Prague (on-site)**

- Updates on/about the ongoing activities (as above).
- Work package 'Measuring soft outcomes'.
- Topics to be defined according to the Work Programme 2024 and participants' needs.
- Project visit on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day (TBC).

#### **Social Innovation Forum 2-3 October 2024 (TBC) (on-site) Brussels**

- Plenary sessions for all CoPs and Networks.
- ALMA network workshop.

#### **8<sup>th</sup> meeting September/October 2024 (online) or joint meeting with the Beneficiaries of ALMA Central Call (on-site)**

Presentation and use of new SI+ platform (TBC)

- Updates on/about the ongoing activities (mobility programmes, work packages and other follow-ups).
- Start work package 'Validation of ALMA projects/calls' (concept).
- Topics to be defined according to the Work Programme 2024 and participants' needs.

#### **9<sup>th</sup> meeting 1<sup>st</sup> week December 2024 (on-site) (TBC)**

- Updates on/about the ongoing activities; topics to be defined (as above).
- Reflections on the work done in 2024.
- Discussion of/on the draft Work Programme 2025, comments and suggestions.

*If there are any changes to the dates, the members will be notified promptly.*

6 The study is available at <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8466&furtherPubs=yes>

Depending on the subject meetings can take the form of learning sessions/workshops, action learning sets<sup>7</sup>, 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 will be shared with network partners via email and in the internal ALMA section/workspace of the [ALMA network MS Teams channel](#).

Information on ALMA calls launched by network partners and central ALMA call as well as general information, including upcoming events and highlights of the events for a wider audience, will be published on the [ESFA website](#). Once SI+ website is in place, a dedicated subpage will be created on the ALMA network. Information will also be published on the EC's ALMA websites<sup>8</sup>.

## Teamwork organisation and logistics

European Competence Centre for Social Innovation and the ALMA network coordinator will function as a secretariat and provide organisational and technical support for network's activities.

A Steering group composed of the ALMA network coordinator, EC representatives, a thematic expert, and representatives of an ESF MAs/IBs (as practitioners) will oversee the implementation of the workplan and monitor network activities. According to specific themes/events/work packages, a small task force can be established to act as preparatory group.

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.

## Work schedule

Time	Activities/meetings	Output/Follow-up
March 2024	Preparation of joint meeting of ALMA network and the Beneficiaries of ALMA Central Call.	Final ALMA network Work Programme 2024 including comments/suggestions of network partners.
23/24 April 2024	6 <sup>th</sup> ALMA network meeting in Malaga (on-site). The programme of the meeting will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- update on the ongoing activities,</li> <li>- discuss the work package SCO/Delegated Act (different kinds of funding schemes, overview on different funding schemes of partners),</li> <li>- content of ALMA section of the new SI+ platform (general information, EU-map, PSD etc.),</li> <li>- and joint session with ALMA beneficiaries including a project visit/project presentation on the second day.</li> </ul>	Overview of ALMA funding schemes. Summary report.
May 2024	Preparatory work for the ALMA section/new website including the Partner Search Database (new templates), general information, support toolkit, etc.	Suggestions for content and draft templates to be used for information provided by partners.

<sup>7</sup> Practical peer support from members with a specific problem/challenge one of the partners might have, including assistance in developing an action plan to solve that problem.

<sup>8</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1549&langId=en>; <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en/how-to-make-agma-work>

26/27 June 2024	<p>7<sup>th</sup> ALMA network meeting in Prague (on-site). The programme of the meeting will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- update on the ongoing activities,</li> <li>- start work package 'Measuring soft outcomes',</li> <li>- topics to be defined according to the Work Programme 2024,</li> <li>- and participants' needs, project visit/project presentation on the second day.</li> </ul>	Report (summary, actions planned, next steps, etc.).
Summer 2024	Preparation of an ALMA network workshop at the Social Innovation Forum of 1-2 October (TBC) to be held in Brussels.	
1-2 October 2024	Social Innovation Forum Brussels (on-site) and ALMA network workshop (wider audience (TBC)).	Summary report of internal ALMA network workshop.
22/23 October 2024 (or end September)	<p>8<sup>th</sup> ALMA network meeting (online?). The programme of the meeting will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- presentation and use of new website,</li> <li>- update on the ongoing activities (programmes, work packages and other follow-ups),</li> <li>- and start work package 'Validation of ALMA projects/calls' (concept).</li> </ul>	<p>Summary report.</p> <p>Website with ALMA network section is online and working.</p> <p>Concept 'Validation of ALMA project/calls'.</p>
November 2024	<p>Taking stock and review of the activities and Work Programme 2024,</p> <p>Preparation of the draft Work Programme 2025,</p> <p>Preparation of the draft validation concept.</p>	<p>Summary report.</p> <p>Draft Work Programme 2025.</p> <p>Draft validation concept for 2025.</p>
1 <sup>st</sup> week December 2024	<p>9<sup>th</sup> ALMA network meeting (on-site?). The programme of the meeting will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discussion of the draft Work Programme 2025 comments, amendments,</li> <li>- update on the ongoing activities (programmes, work packages and other follow-ups),</li> <li>- and presentation of the draft validation concept.</li> </ul>	<p>Summary report.</p> <p>Final Work Programme 2025.</p> <p>Validation concept.</p>

