

European Competence Centre for Social Innovation
ALMA Network

Work Programme 2025

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Background

ALMA – which stands for ‘Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve’ – is an EU initiative aimed at supporting young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). More information can be found on the ESF+ SI+ Initiative website¹.

Objectives of the ALMA Network

The ALMA Network was established on 28 September 2022 as the successor to the TLN Mobility Network², with the following objectives:

- To support Member States (MS) and regions in launching ALMA³ calls under their national and regional European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) programmes 2021–2027.
- To encourage more MS and regions to participate in ALMA.

The ALMA Network is organised and supported by the European Commission (EC) and the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation under the ESF+ Social Innovation+ Initiative.

Network activities focus on:

- Coordination and practical support for launching and implementing ALMA calls at different levels: from planning to drafting of calls to supporting different phases of implementation, depending on the needs of Network members. They will have the opportunity to address challenges, share good practices and discuss different approaches and solutions.
- Working on specific and cross-cutting themes to ensure high quality and further development/improvement of ALMA projects.
- Reaching 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 ALMA.
- Providing support for the ALMA Central Call directly implemented and managed in 2022/2025 by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation as an additional strand for ALMA projects.

ALMA Network members

The Core group⁴ of the ALMA Network consists of ESF+ Managing Authorities (MAs) and Implementing Bodies (IBs) 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 group⁵ comprises ESF+ MAs/IBs who might still be undecided or wish 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 share relevant information on Network activities and outputs, as well as updates on the implementation of the ALMA initiative in MS.

A third and separate group comprises the Beneficiaries of the ALMA Central Call (29 projects)⁶, directly financed by the EC and managed by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation at the EU level. The Network will support these Beneficiaries in activities for exchanging experiences and holding learning/training sessions.

1 <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/network/alma/>.

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

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

4 In 2025, there are 38 Core Group members from 17 MS (BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, HR, IT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).

5 In 2025, there are 16 Extended Group members from 13 MS (CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, RO).

6 The list of signed Grant Agreements of ALMA Central Call is available at [ESF+ SI+ Initiative website](#).

Ensuring member involvement

The work of the ALMA Network relies heavily on the active participation and commitment of its members. With the support of the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation and the EC, the Network maintains an open and mainly self-organising peer-review platform and exchange network for MA/IB practitioners by MA/IBs practitioners. There is a lot of experience from previous mobility projects or the former TLN Mobility Network that Network members can leverage, and a range of models for implementing ALMA mobility measures that can be adapted to local needs.

The Network follows a bottom-up and participatory approach by shaping the work programme based on members' needs (see chapter 'Teamwork organisation and logistics' below) and feedback. Members are actively involved in the planning, design and content of meeting agendas, work programmes or other documents, working methods, etc., and are encouraged to bring their own topics.

The 2025 Work Programme is intended to be a 'living document' that will remain open to further development throughout the work process.

Key lessons learned from 2024

According to its objective of supporting the preparation, launch and implementation of ALMA calls at different levels, the Network's activities focused on key areas for a successful implementation of ALMA, addressing the challenges its members were facing and discussing potential solutions:

Finance/Simplified Cost Options (SCO)/Delegated Act (DA)

Since the ALMA Delegated Act⁷ does not fit all ALMA target groups (especially those with multiple barriers to the labour market for whom the daily unit costs are insufficient), Network members discussed different kinds of funding schemes (DA, different SCO, real costs, mix of both), defining budgets for projects, eligibility of activities and sharing (different) practices. A draft overview and individual templates on ALMA funding schemes were shared with Network members.

Most vulnerable NEETs

The definition of 'most vulnerable NEETs', the institutional set-up and the access, including opportunities for outreach, varies across Member States and regions due to differences in labour market factors, education systems, etc., and must be defined by members at national/regional level.

Launching/drafting calls

It is still important to explain the differences between ALMA and other mobility programmes (Erasmus+). There are different examples available from members who have launched calls.

Transnational Cooperation

Many good examples exist, but there is still a need to discuss technical details (insurance during the stay abroad, concept of work-related learning experiences, transnational agreements, etc.). The importance of a useful ALMA Partner Search Database providing key information on the (host) organisation was noted. To discuss relevant questions, an ALMA Partner Search Database Subgroup was established.

Evaluation/Validation

Discussions began on the topic 'Measuring soft outcomes / soft indicators', providing an overview on existing material (EU study 2022⁸, practical examples from Network members) and key criteria for defining soft indicators.

A table listing ALMA Network events and outputs is enclosed **in the Annex** at the end of the document.

Results

In 2024, seven Member States were implementing ALMA calls/projects under their national/regional ESF+ programmes: Belgium (Brussels region), Czech Republic, Germany, Poland (Lublin Province, Świętokrzyskie Province, Podkarpackie Province), Slovenia, Spain (Catalonia) and Sweden. The ALMA Central Call is running under the ESF+ SI+ initiative in 10 Member States.

A template for providing key information on national/regional ALMA calls/projects will be filled in by members and published on the ESF+ SI+ Initiative website under *ALMA national/regional calls/projects launched under national or regional ESF+ programmes 2021–2027*.

7 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2022.286.01.0001.01.ENG.

8 Study on the pathways to enhance the use of programme-specific indicators in the ESF and ESF+.

Work Programme Activities

Based on the results of a survey on the requirements of Network members for the ALMA 2025 Work Programme, the following specific topics/work packages will be continued in 2025 according to the needs of participants.

Topics/Specifications	Activities / Good practice / Outputs
<p>Updates on national/regional and ALMA Central Call</p> <p>Regular survey updates on national/regional ALMA calls.</p>	<p>Information on national/regional calls/projects uploaded on the ALMA section of the ESF+ SI+ website⁹.</p>
<p>Finance/Use of SCO/EU Delegated Act</p> <p>Mapping existing schemes and discussing questions on ALMA Delegated Act (unit costs) and discussions with other groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular updated overview on funding schemes for ALMA calls/projects launched by Network members. - Set-up of a dedicated sub-/working group. - Discussion on the DA and potential solutions for the current and next ESF+ programming period. - Link to Transnational Network (TN) Simplification, Erasmus+ (increase of unit costs), SCO report of the CoP Social Inclusion.
<p>Most vulnerable NEETs</p> <p>Definition of the most vulnerable target groups and challenges in reaching out, motivating, retaining them. Sharing practical examples and good practice on the composition of target groups and the preparation phase, including outreach strategies and tools and methods to keep participants motivated during the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on social inclusion, outreach, motivation and retention activities in favour of beneficiaries, also linked to costs. - Good practice from Network members and other ESF+ Communities of Practice (e.g. CoP Employment, Education and Skills, CoP Social Inclusion, CoP Social Innovation).
<p>Launching/ drafting calls</p> <p>Practical guidance on challenges and potential solutions (such as finding suitable project operators). Sharing different models, allowing space for individual questions and challenges, discussions and problem solving.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussing and addressing challenges faced by Network members planning to launch and implement ALMA calls at different levels and discussing potential solutions focused on key areas for the successful implementation of ALMA. - Scheme/guidance with ALMA-specific key elements (framework, timeline, application process, selection criteria, support to projects, definition, content and enrichment of each phase).
<p>Transnational and national Cooperation</p> <p>Finding partner institutions, regional/national/transnational partners and companies at home or abroad.</p> <p>Addressing practical (and legal) aspects of organising each phase, including the stay abroad and placement, a list of activities, risk management, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support tools (TCA, updated Partner Search Database). - Many good examples (ALMA Handbook, etc.). - Sharing/presenting good practices, learning sessions, sharing information on legal conditions for the work-related learning experience in Member States and regions (guidance). - Discussing technical details, especially related to the mobility phase (insurance, concept of work-related learning experiences versus VET, transnational agreements, compliance with different regulations on internships, etc.). - Discussing practical aspects of support and skills acquisition/validation in follow-up phase to gain employment or further education in their home country with partners and companies.

9 <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/>

<p>Evaluation/Assessment</p> <p>Soft outcomes/soft indicators that can measure 'distance travelled' by participants and demonstrate the outcomes of ALMA. Exploring methodologies on how and when to collect and elaborate data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussing and amending for ALMA purposes, the soft outcomes report by the ESF support centre, Malta's tool 'Outcome Star', mapping and discussion of practical examples from Network members, link to other CoPs working on that issue. - Development of a questionnaire for project operators, stakeholders and participants.
<p>Dissemination/Communication</p> <p>Sharing good practices, methods and strategies for promoting ALMA and showcasing the results. Working towards long-term sustainability and the continuation of the ALMA Initiative and/or ALMA-type of ESF+ programmes on EU level beyond 2027.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ALMA communication strategy (EC, European Competence Centre for Social Innovation, Steering Group and Members), different examples from Network members on storytelling, videos and information sessions. - Updated ALMA Network information on the ESF+ SI+ website¹⁰. - ALMA Network event combined with the final high-level event for the ALMA Central Call beneficiaries.

Linked to the evaluation and promotion campaign / presentation of the results of the ALMA initiative, a possible additional work package could include the following.

An Evaluation¹¹ of ALMA projects/calls to provide clear data on the benefits of the ALMA initiative and show the results of different approaches.

An evaluation concept could explore the following four categories:

- Added value for participants/NEETs, in particular in terms of informal skills and competences (*programme impact*) => *also linked to the work package on measuring soft outcomes / soft indicators.*
- Identification of factors that explain the causal effects of the projects, especially the added value of the provided support during the preparatory and post-mobility phases (*programme impact*).
- Impact on national implementing partners / project partners (*Network impact*).
- Added value of the ALMA Network (*Network impact*).

The evaluation process could start with a meta-evaluation looking at ALMA calls at national/regional/EU levels and their evaluation results or plans. This will be followed by qualitative interviews with evaluators and ALMA partners (MA, project operators, stakeholders).

It is important to stress that an evaluation means collecting results and drawing conclusions, not comparing them or validating/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.

Events Calendar

The 2025 Work Programme proposes four Network meetings/events plus the Social Innovation Forum, including an ALMA Network workshop:

10th meeting on 6 February 2025 (online)

- Network news (Steering Group, new experts, proposed subgroups and working group topics)
- Work Programme 2025
- Updates (mobility programmes, work packages, ALMA questionnaire, other follow-up)
- Other topics to be defined according to the 2025 Work Programme and the needs of participants

¹⁰ <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/network/alma/>

¹¹ This means that results are collected, and conclusions are drawn not using scientific methods, but focusing on qualitative results/soft outcomes.

11th meeting on 27 March 2025 (online)

- Updates on ongoing activities (mobility programmes, work packages and other follow-up)
- Dissemination/communication strategy, promotion campaign
- Results of the ALMA questionnaire, presentation of Outcome Star by Malta
- Other topics to be defined according to the 2025 Work Programme and the needs of participants

12th meeting on 27–28 May 2025 in Barcelona (on-site)

- Updates on ongoing activities (mobility programmes, work packages and other follow-up)
- SCO – discussion of specific issues, different funding schemes
- Topics to be defined according to the 2025 Work Programme and the needs of participants
- Transnational/national cooperation – exchange with MA, PES, partner organisations, stakeholders, host partners and companies (study visit)

Social Innovation Forum on 1–15 October 2025 (TBC) (on-site) Brussels

- Plenary sessions for all CoPs and Networks
- ALMA Network workshop (topics to be defined)

13th meeting on 12–13 November or early December 2025 (on-site) – combined with the final high-level event for the ALMA Central Call beneficiaries

Internal meeting

- Updates on ongoing activities; topics to be defined (as above)
- Reflection on the work done in 2025
- Discussion of topics for the 2026 Work Programme, comments and suggestions
- Other topics to be defined according to the 2025 Work Programme and the needs of participants

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

Depending on the subject, meetings can take the form of learning sessions/workshops, action learning sets¹², peer learning or peer-to-peer-trainings, study visits, etc.

Network members have expressed a strong preference for practical examples and interactive settings based on case studies, peer-review and knowledge transfer, and more room, and enough time allocated for discussions during the Network meetings.

Further activities include the promotion of ALMA/Outreach activities (information sessions) and establishing 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 members via email and in the internal ALMA section of the [ALMA Network MS Teams channel](#)¹³.

Information on ALMA calls launched by Network members and ALMA Central Call, summary reports of the events, general information including upcoming events and highlights of events for a wider audience will be published on the ESF+ SI+ Initiative website / ALMA Network section¹⁴. Information will also be published on the EC ALMA websites¹⁵.

¹² Practical peer support from members for a specific problem/challenge that one of the members may have and help them to develop an action plan to solve the problem.

¹³ [ALMA Network MS Teams channel](#).

¹⁴ <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/network/alma/>.

¹⁵ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/alma-active-inclusion-initiative-young-people_en; <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en/how-to-make-alma-work>.

Teamwork organisation and logistics

In general, the ALMA Network members remain collectively responsible, in close collaboration with the Network coordinator, EC representatives and thematic expert(s), for all decisions concerning the ALMA Network, the Work Programme(s) and all activities and meetings.

The European Competence Centre for Social Innovation and the ALMA Network coordinator will function as a secretariat, providing organisational and technical support for Networks activities.

A Steering Group composed of the ALMA Network coordinator, EC representatives, thematic expert(s) and representatives of ESF+ MAs/IBs as practitioners will discuss the progress of ALMA Network activities, collecting valuable ideas and suggestions for the activities by reflecting needs and expectations of the members. They will also propose adjustments, when necessary, with the aim to foster stronger engagement and sense of ownership among ALMA Network members (see Steering Group guidelines).

Different subgroups, such as Partner Search Database, Communication, SCO, Evaluation or Soft Outcomes/Indicators, could be set up to contribute actively with specific sub-topics.

The ALMA Network thematic experts will be responsible for preparing and revising Work Programmes and organising Network activities (content, priorities, agendas, etc.) in close collaboration with the Network coordinator, EC representatives, Steering Group and Network members.

Work schedule

Time	Activities/Meetings	Output/Follow-up
6 February 2025	10 th ALMA Network meeting (online). Updates on ongoing activities, presentation of the final Work Programme 2025.	Summary report
27 March 2025	11 th ALMA Network meeting (online). Updates on ongoing activities, topics to be defined according to the 2025 Work Programme and the needs of participants' needs.	Report (summary, actions planned, next steps)
27/28 May 2025	12 th ALMA Network meeting in Barcelona (on-site). Internal meeting and study visit (TNC).	Summary report Scheme/guidance with ALMA specific key elements (framework, timeline, application process, selection criteria, support to projects)
Summer 2025	Preparatory ALMA Network workshop at Social Innovation Forum on 1–15 October (TBC) in Brussels.	Concept note for internal and joint workshops
1–15 October 2025 (TBD)	Social Innovation Forum in Brussels (on-site) and ALMA Network workshop (topics to be defined).	Summary report of internal ALMA Network workshop
12–13 November or early December 2025	Combined event: final high-level event for the ALMA Central Call beneficiaries + 13 th ALMA Network meeting in Brussels (on-site). Internal meeting: Taking stock and reviewing activities and Work Programme 2025, updates on ongoing activities (programmes, work packages and other follow-up), workshop for ideas for the 2026 Work Programme.	Summary report Ideas for the Work Programme 2026
November/ December 2025	Preparation of the draft Work Programme 2026 and finalisation including comments/suggestions from Network members.	Final Work Programme 2026

ANNEX: Table of ALMA Network events and outputs 2023–2024¹⁶

<p>1st Network meeting on 20 April 2023 (online)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of the Network & working procedures, - Initial Work Programme 2023/2024, - Presentation of ALMA measures by members and the ALMA Central Call. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Final Work Programme 2023</p> <p>ALMA Partner Search Database</p>
<p>2nd Network meeting on 19–20 June 2023 in Berlin Combined with the kick-off event of the German Juventus Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practice-oriented internal sessions of the Network, - First-hand experiences and meetings with German project operators, - Study visit to a German project operator. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Survey ‘The state of play of ALMA calls in Member States/regions’ and its results</p> <p>Highlights</p>
<p>3rd Network meeting on 9 November 2023 (online)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updates on ongoing ALMA activities in Member States, ALMA Central Call at EU-level, - Discussion on the ALMA target group of most vulnerable NEETs. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Overview ‘Timeline national-regional calls’</p>
<p>4th Network meeting on 5 December 2023 in Milan Joint activity with ALMA Central Call beneficiaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal sessions (SCO/ALMA Delegated Act and key elements for drafting ALMA calls), - Joint sessions and panel discussion on core elements of transnational cooperation/mobility in ALMA – good practices from ALMA Network members. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Scheme with ALMA specific key elements for drafting calls (framework, timeline, application process, selection criteria, support to projects).</p> <p>Highlights</p>
<p>5th Network meeting on 6 February 2024 (online)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft Work Programme 2024 and support tools, - ALMA Handbook, - Breakout sessions to share members’ insights according to the WP, future activities and Network topics. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Final Work Programme 2024</p> <p>ALMA Handbook</p>
<p>6th Network meeting on 23–24 April 2024 in Malaga Joint activity with ALMA Central Call beneficiaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal sessions (overview of funding schemes of existing ALMA calls and discussions on different kinds of funding schemes), - Joint sessions with project operators from Germany, Sweden, Czech Republic, Spain and workshop with project operators from Spain. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Overview on funding schemes of ALMA calls/projects</p> <p>Highlights</p>

¹⁶ All results and outputs are available to ALMA Network members on the [ALMA Network MS Teams channel](#).

<p>7th Network meeting on 26–27 June 2024 in Prague</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal sessions (SCO and other types of ALMA funding schemes, introduction to the work package ‘Measuring soft outcomes / soft indicators’), - Meeting and panel discussion with project operators and target group from the Czech Republic, - Study visit to JURTA, O.P.S. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Overview of funding schemes for existing or planned ALMA calls/projects</p> <p>Highlights</p>
<p>8th Network meeting on 19 September 2024 (online)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updates on ongoing ALMA activities by network members (new calls launched in Podkarpackie Region (Poland) and Catalonia (Spain)), - Updates on national and regional calls / project templates, ALMA Manual of Guidance, ALMA Partner Search Database/Social Innovation Match. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Draft template for national/regional calls/projects</p>
<p>Social Innovation Forum on 1–2 October Brussels / Two ALMA workshops</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ALMA Network Workshop Focusing on the work done so far, discussing challenges and key findings, identifying gaps and future steps to improve ALMA projects 2. Combined ALMA Network and CoP on Social Innovation workshop: Sharing Success – Scaling up Social Innovation Across Europe. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary reports</p> <p>ALMA project template for combined workshop</p> <p>Review of the ALMA Work Programme 2024 and first ideas for the next ALMA Work Programme 2025</p>
<p>9th Network meeting on 26–27 November 2024 in Athens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal session (overview of key criteria for the definition of soft indicators and methods/tools of measurement, discussion of topics and way of working for the 2025 Work Programme), - Panel discussion with an ALMA project operator and participants from Greece. 	<p>Results/Outputs</p> <p>Summary report of the event</p> <p>Draft Work Programme 2025</p> <p>Steering Group guidelines</p> <p>Updated Manual of Guidance</p> <p>Template for national/regional calls/projects</p> <p>Structure for ALMA Partner Search Database/Social Innovation Match identified</p> <p>Highlights</p>

