



REPORTING & MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Promoting the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystem services in the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories

Guidelines for Grantees

Grantees are strongly recommended to read this guidance at the early stage of their project and before reporting.



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Introduction

The objective of these guidelines is to help beneficiaries of BEST 2.0+ to understand the technical, financial and administrative provisions of the grant agreements as regards to the **technical** and **financial management** of their projects and **reporting obligations**.

During the lifetime of the project, each grantee will be required to **report on the technical and financial progress and achievements** of the project. There are three different types of monitoring / reporting exercises with different requirements; each of them detailed in the sections below:

- **Monthly progress:** technical progress
- **Interims report:** technical and financial achievements for the last period
- **Final report:** overall technical and financial achievements as well as a report on the indicators

Interim as well as final **payments are subject to the approval of technical and financial reports**.

I. Monitoring and reporting requirements

1. Type of reports

Monthly progress (technical)	
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on technical progress accomplished during the last month as regards to the planned activities, deliverables and milestones defined in Annex 1 of the grant agreement. Identify potential risks which might impact the project (calendar, resources, feasibility, etc.).
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief technical update on the status of activities. Short description of progress accomplished and problems encountered together with relevant attachments.
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The grantee provides its updates in a dedicated area of the BEST2.0+ portal
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be submitted monthly, within the first week of the following month.

Interim reports (technical & financial)	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on technical and financial achievements over the period. Identify potential risks, which might impact the project (calendar, resources, feasibility, etc.).
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One technical report (max. 15 pages without annexes) containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Interim Report template available under “Useful Documents” on the BEST 2.0+ website One financial report containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim report Supporting documents Each interim report is accompanied by a payment request <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See payment request template under “Useful Documents” on the BEST 2.0+ website.
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In electronic version only. Templates of the technical and financial reports will be provided by the Secretariat in due time. Once completed, the reports will be submitted by the grantee in the dedicated “Reporting” area of the BEST 2.0+ portal.
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be submitted online <u>within 30 days</u> following the end of the period. Refer to your Grant Agreement (Special conditions, Art. 6) to check the number and schedule of interim reports.

Final report (technical & financial)	
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical progress accomplished during <u>the whole project duration (including previous period(s))</u>. • Expenditures <u>over the last period</u>.
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators • One technical report (max. 25 pages without annexes) containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See Final Report template available under “Useful Documents” on the BEST 2.0+ website • One financial report containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final report ○ Supporting documents • Each final report is accompanied by a payment request <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See payment request template under “Useful Documents” on the BEST 2.0+ website.
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators: table to be completed online on the portal. • Templates of the technical and financial reports will be provided by the Secretariat in due time. • Once completed, the reports will be submitted by the grantee in the dedicated “Reporting” area of the BEST 2.0+ portal.
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be submitted <u>within 60 days</u> following the end of the project. • Refer to your Grant Agreement (Special conditions, Art. 6) to check the schedule of reports.

a. Reporting and payments schedule

- **Signature of the Grant Agreement:**
 - The pre-financing is paid by the Secretariat within 30 days following the signature of the grant agreement by the last party.
- **Interim reports:**
 - **The complete report** (technical + financial, including the payment request) is to be submitted by the grantee in the BEST 2.0+ portal within 30 days following the end of the period.
 - **The payment** will be made by the Secretariat within 30 days following the approval of the report.
- **Final report:**
 - **The complete report** (technical + financial, including the payment request) is to be submitted by the grantee on the BEST 2.0+ portal within 60 days following the end of the period.
 - **The payment** will be made by the Secretariat within 45 days following the approval of the report.

As a reminder, the total sum of all pre-financing and interim payments may not exceed 90% of the total grant. The remaining 10% balance will be paid following the approval of the final report.

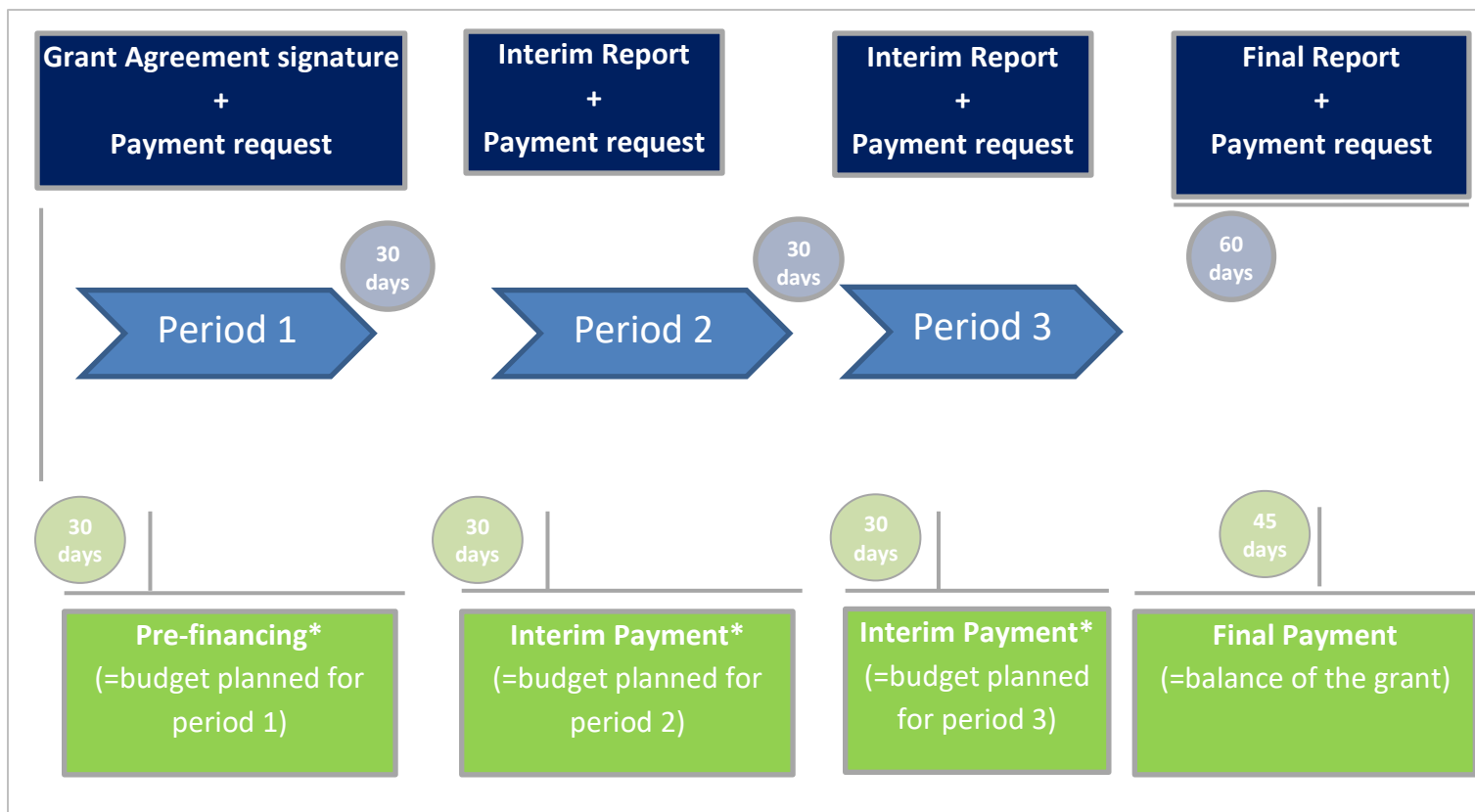


Figure 1: Example of a project with three reporting periods.

II. Technical management and reporting

1. Management of the grant

a. Grant agreement

The BEST 2.0+ Grant agreement and its annexes, signed by both the grantee and the IUCN, is the key document which contains all information and obligations for the grantee and the BEST 2.0+ Secretariat.

b. Project changes

Project changes relate to any major modification from project proposal (Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement) and planned activities (a way in which the project has been expected to be accomplished). Any deviation to the grant agreement, either technical or financial, must be notified to the BEST2.0+ regional focal point and the BEST2.0+ Secretariat as soon as possible.

Based on the extent of the deviation, the grant agreement might need to be amended. In that case, the BEST2.0+ Secretariat/ Regional Focal Point will inform the grantee (Annex 2 of the Grant Agreement – Art. 8).

No amendment will be issued for an extension of the project dates.

c. Communication activities

Promotion and communication activities have to be in line with activities as described in the **project** (Grant Agreement - Annex 1) and must respect the provisions of the **grant agreement** and the **communication and visibility guidelines** available under “Useful Documents” on the [BEST 2.0+ website](#).

The beneficiary will **list all communication activities** undertaken and in the technical report. Besides a copy of all materials produced (images/videos/article etc.) should be annexed to the technical report.



Remember that each grantee has the **obligation to explicitly acknowledge the EU financial contribution to BEST 2.0+ and its donor, the European Commission’s department for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)**. Please refer to the communication guidelines for the requirements and due contributions.

2. Reporting

For each of the reporting exercise, interim and final, we invite you to follow closely the table of contents in the **templates** and carefully read the guidelines describing the information expected in each section.

The interim reports and final report have a limited number of pages; it is thus key to present the achievements in a **concise and precise** manner. Any additional information or documents can be shared via the annexes.

In general, the reporting should present in a comprehensive manner the **overall progress achieved** for each activity planned and the **impact** of the project so far. It should also identify **problems or difficulties** encountered as well as **measures taken or foreseen to overcome** them and any **changes to the initial plan**.



BEST 2.0+ 2020-2023
Interim report n° XX

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Figure 2: Interim report template - Table of contents

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Figure 3: Final Report template - Table of contents

Each technical report should include all relevant **annexes** produced during the period, i.e:

- Deliverables
- Photos of activities and results, when relevant
- Registry and of communication and dissemination activities. When relevant, pdf files of publications (including brochures, posters, books, albums) and pictures of other dissemination materials / gadgets produced by the project shall be provided.

III. Financial management and reporting

1. Reliable accounting and reporting system



The mention of the **project reference (BEST 2.0+ 20xx-xx-xxx)** is mandatory in the analytical accounting system(s) and in the time registration. Costs not clearly attributed to a specific project risk being disallowed as ineligible. The **project reference must be stated** in all project related invoices and in all correspondence. Ask your suppliers and subcontractors to include this number as a reference on their invoices; the code can be written or stamped on the original paper invoice.

Example:

- *All invoices, receipts and time-sheets bear the reference BEST2.0+-2020-I-195*
- *The subject of all email messages starts with the reference BEST2.0+-2020-I-195*

2. Project file & Record keeping

Each grant beneficiary must keep and regularly update a project file throughout the whole period of project implementation. The project file must contain:

- **Technical** documents such as deliverables, communication activities, etc.
- **Administrative** documents such as the grant agreement.
- **Financial** documents **collecting, recording and reporting financial transactions**.



Original documents, especially accounting and tax records, stored on any appropriate medium, including digitalised originals in accordance with their national legislation, must be **kept for five years after the date of payment of the balance by BEST2.0+**. It is mandatory to safeguard the documents **in the offices** of the organisation. We strongly recommend to ensure regular “backups” (refer to Article 15.7 of the General Conditions to the Grant Agreement for a non-exhaustive list of documents).

a. What are the supporting documents to be provided for the financial reporting?

Three elements of costs documentation are to be provided:

1. Proof of costs – invoice/receipt
2. Proof of payment – bank debit advice
3. Proof of work – evidence of work performed

Cost category	Supporting documents <i>(non-exhaustive list, provided as an indication of the documentation subject to audit)</i>	
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment contract. • Pay-slips. • Timesheets dated and signed. • Breakdown into gross salary, social security charges, insurance and net salary. • Proof of income tax, social charges, insurances, etc. payroll related disbursements by the employer 	
Travel	Per diems	Actual costs
	If fixed per diem rates are used – proof of payment of the per diem and travel policy applied by the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invoice, receipts or e-ticket clearly stating the price and a table summarizing them. • Boarding pass or alternative evidence, such as entry visas; • Costs related to the use of a beneficiaries' own vehicle(s) must be supported by a vehicle logbook and should be calculated using the relevant published national/territorial rate for vehicle usage (where this is available). • For fuel and oil expenses, a summary list of the distance covered, the average consumption of the vehicles used, fuel costs and maintenance costs.

	<p>In both cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence and purpose of travel, such as mission reports, personal invitation, agenda of the event, presentation, speaking point, etc. • Proof of stay on site - hotel invoice, rooming list, signed attendance list.
Equipment and supplies/other costs, services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of procurement procedures such as request for quotes, quotes received, quotes evaluation, tendering documents, bids from tenderers and evaluation reports. • Proof of commitments such as contracts and order forms. • Proof of receipt of goods such as delivery notes from suppliers. • Proof of completion of works, such as acceptance certificates. • Proof of purchase such as invoices and receipts. • Proof of payment such as bank statements. • Evidence of work performed, such as reports, studies, any other validated deliverables. • Photos of the equipment/materials. • Proof of visibility compliance – use of EU logos.
Meetings, workshops, seminars and other project events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda. • Minutes. • Signed participants' list. • Proof of stay on site - hotel invoice, rooming list, signed attendance list and proof of payment • Invoices from service providers for venue hire, receptions or catering and proof of payment • Relevant photos (should accompany the written description of the project activities in the technical reports submitted to the Secretariat).

b. What financial documents should be kept in my file? **In addition** to the previous supporting documents

Cost category	Supporting documents
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultancy contracts in cases of in-house consultants • Bank statements showing the payment of salaries • Supporting documents in respect of income tax, social charges, insurances, and any other costs borne by the employer
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures on per diems • Proofs of payment of all expenses– bank statements
Equipment and supplies/other costs, services	Any other document you deem useful
Meetings, workshops, seminars and other project events	Other Photos of field work, photos before, during and after the work, carried out by the project beneficiaries, or by sub-contractors, should be maintained as evidence of completion of the project activities.

3. Costs – Eligibility

a. Eligible costs

Eligible costs are **actual costs incurred by the Grantee** which meet all the following criteria (see Article 13.1. of the General Conditions to your grant agreement):

- a) They are incurred **during the implementation period** of the Project as specified in Article 3 “Term” of the Special Conditions of the grant agreement. In particular:
 - (i) Costs relating to services and works shall relate to activities performed during the implementation period.
 - (ii) Costs incurred should be paid before the submission of the final reports. They may be paid afterwards, provided they are listed in the final report together with the estimated date of payment;
 - (iii) Procedures to award contracts, as referred to in Article 9, may have been initiated and contracts may be concluded by the Grantee(s) before the start of the implementation period of the Project.
- b) Costs are indicated in the estimated overall **budget** for the Project;
- c) Costs are **necessary** for the implementation of the Project;
- d) Costs are **identifiable and verifiable**, in particular being recorded in the accounting records and determined according to the accounting standards and the usual cost accounting practices applicable;
- e) Costs comply with the requirements of applicable **tax and social legislation**;
- f) Costs are **reasonable, justified and comply with the requirements of sound financial management**, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

b. Ineligible costs

- Debts and debt service charges (interest);
- Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- Costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union grant (including through the European Development Fund);
- Currency exchange losses; exchange rate losses are not eligible costs and will not be compensated;
- Credits to third parties;
- Contributions in kind, including contributions from third parties including voluntary work;
- Excessive or reckless expenditure (including unnecessary or wasteful outlays);
- Costs related to the proposal preparation or to the review phase;
- Recoverable Value-Added Tax (VAT).

In order to claim VAT, the beneficiary must provide a declaration from the national tax authorities certifying that the beneficiary in question is NOT able to recover VAT (fully or partially). This declaration should be kept in the project file.

4. Actual costs and Simplified Cost Options (SCO)

a. Actual costs

Actual costs are the costs really **incurred** (work completed/goods delivered) and **paid**.

Example: A financial report covers the period from 01 October 2016 to 30 September 2017. The contract for services with a provider was signed on 01 November 2016 and includes two deliverables. By 30 September 2017, one deliverable was accepted, invoiced by the provider and paid. The financial report has to include the invoice for one deliverable. It cannot include the final invoice for the last deliverable because it has been neither completed nor paid.

- **Only actually incurred eligible costs will be reimbursed:**
 - Budgeted costs – i.e. costs shown in the budget submitted with your proposal - are used to establish an estimate budget for the project. Once awarded a grant the “actual” costs incurred must be used as the basis for completing the Interim and Final Financial Reports (except for indirect costs which can be included at a maximum rate of 7% of the eligible direct costs).
 - Incurred costs must be **supported by documentary evidence** proving that they are actual costs. Estimated amounts, or budgeted amounts, are not acceptable and will be deemed to be ineligible.
 - Please note that the **maximum amount** of grant is set out in Article 1 of the Special Conditions of the Grant Agreement. Any costs incurred in excess of this amount will be covered by the beneficiary.
- **Cut – off period:** The reported costs can be incurred **only after the start date of the grant agreement and before the end date** of the grant agreement.

Examples:

- *The start date of the grant agreement is 01 October 2016. A computer for the project officer was purchased on 15 September 2016. The cost is not eligible.*
- *The end date of the grant agreement is 30 September 2017. The staff worked on reporting in October 2017. The costs of staff for the period of October 2017 are not eligible.*

- **Internal costs** are costs of the goods and services not invoiced by third parties, such as costs resulting from the transactions between different departments of the same organisation. These costs may include a profit margin and are not allowed.

Example: An organisation owns a facility rented to the visitors. The costs of rent cannot be charged to the project, unless a clear evidence can be provided of the absence of profit margin.

- **In-kind** contributions are not **costs**. **In-kind** contributions do not involve any expenditure for the beneficiary and do not generate costs in its accounts.

Example: An organisation uses services of an unpaid volunteer. Even though this results in a benefit to the project implementation, there is no cost to be incurred and paid.

- **Costs based on cost share.** Costs charged to the project partly must be provided with a sound justification of allocation principle.

Example: An organisation charges 20% of the hotel accommodation invoice to BEST2.0+. The balance is allocated to another project. You must be prepared to explain the percentage of allocation, for example, the project manager's timesheet shows 1 out of 5 days worked on BEST2.0+ during the conference.

b. Simplified Cost Options (SCO)

The **unit costs** for items budgeted using a simplified cost options are established prior to the signature of the grant agreement following checks that they are plausible and reasonable. **The unit cost is fixed and not subject to changes.**

Example: An hourly rate for the budget line "Project officer" is €30 in the approved budget. This hourly rate will be used in all reports throughout the entire duration of the project, no changes are possible.

Checks and audits

- Auditors will not check supporting documents to verify the actual costs incurred;
- Auditors will focus on a correct application of the formulas for the calculation, related inputs and relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Example:

- *Does the number of hours in the report matches the timesheets?*
- *Has the agreed hourly rate been correctly used in the calculation?*
- *Is there sufficient evidence of the work performed by this individual?*

Example

Approved budget: MSc Student was budgeted for six months.

Cost	Unit	# of units	Unit value (€)	Total cost (€)
1.1.2.1. Partner A. Lead Applicant MSc Student	month	6	600	3,600

Reporting template: If timesheets show that MSc Student worked for 5 months during the reporting period, you must report **five** units at the agreed unit price of €600.

Cost	Unit	# of units	Unit value (€)	Total cost (€)
1.1.2.1. Partner A. Lead Applicant MSc Student	month	5	600	3,000

Changes in the unit cost

The changes in the unit cost do not affect the reporting. If the actual monthly cost of MSc Student is €575, you will still use the agreed rate of **€600** in your report. Conversely, if the unit cost is found to be higher than the agreed rate, you are still obliged to use the fixed rate and absorb the loss.

The transition to reimbursement of actually incurred costs can be allowed only if the resulting total cost is equal or lower to the one in the approved budget. If the total of actually incurred costs is higher than in the approved budget, the loss will be absorbed by the grantee.

Supporting documents

✓ Work Contract – *already provided prior to the contract signature;*

- ✓ Pay slips – already provided prior to the contract signature;
- ✓ **Timesheets to be provided!**
- ✓ Any other useful information related to the work performed.

5. Timesheets

Each individual working on the project must complete **timesheets**. **The timesheets must record the total working time**, that is to say both the time dedicated to the BEST2.0+ project as well as the time devoted to other activities or projects. **It is not sufficient for the timesheet to record only the time spent on the BEST2.0+ project.**



Regular and reliable time recording is of critical importance for the projects using SCO for Human Resources costs. The unit rate (hourly, daily or monthly) is fixed in the approved budget. The only element for reporting is the number of units (hours, days and months) worked on the project. Therefore, absence of or inconsistencies in timesheets will result in the rejection of costs.

The use of timesheets reflecting the total working time of the Grantee's personnel and the personnel of all co-beneficiaries is mandatory. Non-compliance with this obligation will result in suspending the payment (see article 7.2. of the Grant Agreement).

If your organization does not have a time registration system in place at the time that the grant agreement is signed, it should, as a minimum:

- Establish registration and submission routines for the project staff,
- Introduce a validation routine for the supervisors/line managers to certify the correctness of the timesheets.

Standardized and certified time registration systems are accepted provided they include all of the information indicated below. We strongly recommend the use of the timesheet template available under "Useful Documents" on the [BEST 2.0+ website](#).

Information required that must be included in the timesheet:

- a) Clear identification or reference to BEST2.0+ project and its reference.
- b) Clear identification of the employee.
- c) Clear identification of the year, month and day.
- d) Number of working time units worked for BEST2.0+ project.
- e) Number of working time units worked for other projects.
- f) Number of working time units worked in total.
- g) Date and signature of the employee.
- h) Date and signature of the supervisor.

The completed timesheet for a given month must be signed by the individual and approved by the his/her supervisor in a timely manner – e.g. during the first week of the following month.

6. Procurement



- Make sure you have followed BEST2.0+ procurement policy – see Annex 3 of your grant agreement.
- In case of single sourcing you may be asked to explain how you have ensured the best value for money, i.e. how you have identified the most appropriate provider in terms of economic efficiency and professional capacity.
- **Purchases of goods and services with a total contractual value equal to or more than EUR 20,000 but less than EUR 40,000 must be based on written quotations received from at least three potential suppliers.** Quotations must include the price, the description and quantity of the goods, as well as the delivery time and place.

7. Currency conversion.

If your accounts are kept in EUR and you incur expenditure in other currencies, the standard rates to convert actual expenditure incurred in other currencies into euro are based on the monthly InforEuro rate on the date of payment as published on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/index_en.cfm.

8. Insurance

The beneficiaries of BEST2.0+ must contract insurances in accordance with BEST2.0+ grant agreements. In case of theft, break and entry or burglaries official claims must be lodged with appropriate authorities. The evidence of claims must be kept on file.

9. How to complete your periodic reports?

All the periodic financial reports are integrated in one pre-filled workbook tailor-made for each project.

The first spreadsheet is the Financial report for all periods and account reconciliation tables, the next spreadsheets are Transactions Lists for each reporting period.

1. Period 1:

- Start by completing Transaction List 1.
- SCO: Fill in the cells highlighted in blue – number of time units according to the timesheets / number of km / number of per diems.
- Actual costs: Fill in the cells highlighted in blue: invoice number/reference, invoice date, description of the transaction, cost in EUR.
- All the other cells in the spreadsheet are blocked.
- The financial report on the first tab of the workbook will be populated automatically.
- Complete the cells highlighted in blue in the account reconciliation table at the bottom of the tab “Financial report”.

2. Period 2: repeat the same sequence of steps.
3. Final reporting period: repeat the same sequence of steps. If the total cost of any main cost category exceeds the budgeted amount by more than 20%, explain the variance in the last column.

IV. Tips for reporting

- **Dedicate sufficient time for the project reporting.** Reporting on your project technical and financial achievements is a quite straightforward exercise although it requires time. Make sure that enough time is planned and that persons in charge are aware of upcoming deadlines for submission of the project to be ready by the deadline.
- **Evidence for Project Audit: Project file & Record keeping.** Ensure that all documents proving the proper implementation of the project are archived in a comprehensive and organised manner during 5 years after the last payment. This is key as documents can be required to ensure that even after the end of the projects any document can be provided, also
- **Timesheet.** The amount of personnel costs which will be reimbursed is linked to the volume of hours dedicated to the project; the timesheet is the proof for this computation. Ensure that timesheets are correctly completed and communicate to the team members why it is needed. A template has been developed to make the process as straightforward as possible.
- **Co-beneficiaries.** Ensure good coordination and communication! It is the task of the lead beneficiary to issue consolidated financial and technical reporting, gathering information from all co-beneficiaries involved; make sure to foresee enough time to consolidate their contributions.

a. Frequent mistakes to avoid

- **Personnel costs: incorrect time claimed**
 - As a general rule, you must keep timesheets that comply with the minimum requirements. If your organisation does not have a model timesheet, please use the BEST2.0+ timesheet template.
 - You should only claim hours actually worked on the project. As such, information included in timesheets must match records of annual leave, sick leave, other types of leave and work-related travel. You also cannot claim hours during absences (such as annual leave or sick leave).
- **Costs without valid supporting documents or missing supporting documents.**
 - Ensure that all supporting documents are linked to costs and adequately saved – see I.2 Project file & Record keeping

b. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Who needs to fill in the reporting (technical and financial) templates?

It is the task of the lead beneficiary to complete the reporting. The lead applicant should coordinate with co-applicants to submit one single consolidated report for financial and technical reporting.

2. How do the costs of the co-applicant(s) have to be reported?

The lead beneficiary to whom they are related will have to consolidate all costs including the one of co-applicants.

3. If a durable good purchased in the frame of my grant is also partly used for another project, how should I report this?

You should indicate the percentage used for the BEST2.0+ project and include only the pro-rata cost.

4. What to do if the bank account agreed in the grant agreement has changed?

To avoid delays in the payment, please submit your amendment request with the new financial identification form (link is also mentioned on the payment request at the bottom) before the submission of the financial reporting. You will also be requested to confirm your bank account identification form with the payment request.

5. How do I report budget shifts between costs categories (that fall within the contractual flexibility of 20%)?

The lead beneficiary has to encode the consumed costs into the financial reporting template. The overview sheet will check if the budget shift is acceptable or if explanations is required.

The total amount of the final budget for the entire project should be equal to the total amount of the initial budget (or as amended).

6. Where to include the amount of overheads/indirect costs that I would like to declare?

The overheads rate, as indicated in your grant agreement (maximum 7% of the direct costs), is introduced in your financial reporting template.

7. What should be the period covered by the reporting (interim or final)?

The period to be covered by the technical and financial reporting is indicated in your financial reporting template. All reporting obligations are also detailed in the grant agreement (article 6).

Annexes

Annex 1: Actual costs: How to calculate staff costs