

Terms of Reference

Second Call for Proposals

15 March to 01 June 2018

Objectives

The Interreg Atlantic Area Programme is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation objective of the European Union Cohesion Policy for the programming period 2014-2020. The Programme supports cooperation addressing shared regional challenges and innovative approaches to strengthen territorial and sustainable economic development in the Atlantic Area. The Programme targets partnership projects which will provide joint solutions to shared transnational challenges faced by eligible regions along the Atlantic coast in France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The Programme runs from 2015 to 2020 and invests EUR 140 M ERDF to co-finance transnational cooperation projects promoted by organisations from the Atlantic Area. Projects will be expected to deliver against the outputs specified in the reference document “Atlantic Area Cooperation Programme”. This will be achieved by involving key and relevant local and regional stakeholders across the transnational space in the priority areas defined below. The latest version of the Cooperation Programme document constitutes the legal basis for this call for projects and is available on the Programme website ([click here to access this document](#)).

Eligible regions

The cooperation area covered by the Programme includes the European Atlantic regions listed below. Project partners must be located within the eligible territory of the Atlantic Area regions. In duly justified cases, if the benefit for regions in the cooperation area is clearly demonstrated, organisations based outside the cooperation area in the EU or in EFTA states may join project partnerships of the Programme.



Atlantic Area eligible regions

France: Territories of the former Regions : Haute-Normandie; Basse-Normandie; Pays-de-la-Loire; Bretagne; Poitou-Charentes; Aquitaine.

Ireland: Border, Midland and Western; Southern and Eastern.

Portugal: Norte; Algarve; Centro; Lisboa; Alentejo; Açores; Madeira.

Spain: Galicia; Principado de Asturias; Cantabria; Navarra; País Vasco; Andalucía (Huelva, Cádiz and Sevilla); Islas Canarias.

United Kingdom: Cumbria; Cheshire; Greater Manchester; Lancashire; Merseyside; Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Bristol/Bath Area; Dorset and Somerset; Cornwall and Isles of Scilly; Devon; West Wales and the Valleys; East Wales; South Western Scotland; Highlands and Islands; Northern Ireland.

Priorities and ERDF budget availability

The Programme has EUR 43 M remaining for this second call for proposals. The table below provides more details on how much is remaining for each of the four Programme priority axes. This allocation may be adjusted by the Monitoring Committee (MC) in line with the needs of the Programme.

Priorities	Specific objectives	Indicative ERDF allocation
1. Stimulating innovation and competitiveness	1.1 - Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness	EUR 11 M
	1.2 - Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes	
2. Fostering resource efficiency	2.1 - Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency	EUR 10 M
	2.2 - Fostering Green Growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency	
3. Strengthening the territory's resilience to risks of natural, climate and human origin	3.1 - Strengthening risk management systems	EUR 10 M
4. Enhancing biodiversity and natural and cultural assets	4.1 - Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems' services	EUR 12 M
	4.2 - Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development	



All priority axes in the cooperation Programme are open. Under the terms of this call, a project proposal must focus on only one priority axis and one specific objective.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to check the already approved projects in the respective thematic areas to avoid duplication and make use of synergies. The Committee will not approve project applications that duplicate what has already been funded.

Application process

The second call for projects is organised according to a one step procedure. Full project proposals must be submitted only through the web-based application form which will be made available on the Atlantic Area Programme website (www.atlanticarea.eu).

Submission and calendar for approval of full applications

Applicants will have 11 weeks to submit their full project application. The Joint Secretariat (JS) of the Programme will assess all the applications on the basis of the eligibility and selection criteria (identified below) approved by the Monitoring Committee composed by the Members States of the Programme. Final decisions will be made by the Committee by the end of October 2018. Applicants will be notified of the results by email no later than one month after the MC decision date. The MC decision results will also be made available on the Atlantic Area Programme website (www.atlanticarea.eu).

Practical information

The electronic application form, the Programme Manual - which provides detailed support and guidance for applicants - and other relevant documents including the “Atlantic Area Cooperation Programme”, are available in the “Call for Projects” domain of the Programme website (www.atlanticarea.eu). It is important that applicants consult all the information in each document before applying for the Programme.

Calendar

15 March 2018	Opening of the call for projects
1 June 2018 - 1:00 PM (Lisbon time)	Deadline for the submission of the application
End of October 2018	Monitoring Committee approval decision



Quality of projects, results and impacts sought

The Interreg Atlantic Area Programme Monitoring Committee is the governing body for the Programme. It is committed to deliver visible, tangible and transnational results, supporting genuinely high quality transnational projects, which respond to the priority axes and address the Programme specific objectives.

The Programme is committed to address key transnational challenges or common transnational problems shared by different regions across the Atlantic Area. Projects should also be impact oriented, seeking to generate sustainable changes in the region. They must, therefore, have a strong design and relevance for all partner regions involved, respond to a genuine transnational need, and have a robust transnational feature, with a strong and balanced coverage of partners and funding over the different countries of the Programme area. The Monitoring Committee also prioritises sustainable projects, paying attention to how projects plan to leave a legacy and to roll out results widely across the programme area.

Project partnership, applicants and beneficiaries

A wide range of organisations, under public or private law, are potential beneficiaries of ERDF funding and may, therefore, join a project partnership. Eligible organisations cover entities like:

- National, regional, or local public bodies;
- Education and research institutions;
- Not-for-profit organisations;
- Private and public companies;
- International, transnational and cross-border organisations.

The number of partners depends on the nature and scope of the project. It should reflect an optimum capacity to deliver its aims and objectives and a balanced distribution of roles and funding among partners and over the various countries of the Atlantic Area. Therefore, the size of the partnership is flexible and should reflect the scope of the project while remaining manageable. Nevertheless, it must involve at least 3 partners located in eligible regions and from 3 different Member States, and demonstrate how it can benefit the whole programme area.

The Lead Partner

Projects have a Lead Partner responsible for coordinating the application and submission process. If the project is approved for funding, the Lead Partner becomes responsible for the full management



and operation of the project. It also bears the legal and financial liability for the project partnership while being in charge of communication with the Joint Secretariat and the Managing Authority.

The Lead Partner must be either a public body, a private not-for-profit organisation, a university, an education institution, a research organisation or an international organisation acting under national law, be located in the Programme eligible area, possessing strong administrative and financial capacity to engage transnationally and have the competencies to manage the project and partnership effectively.

Duration of projects

Projects should normally propose a work timeline with a duration of 18 to 36 months, with a start in the first half of 2019 and taking into account that the latest possible end date for a project is 31 December 2022.

Budget and eligible expenditure

There is no pre-established lower or upper limit to project budgets. They depend on the nature, scope of projects and number of partners. To ensure that operations have a robust transnational feature, a strong and balanced coverage of partners and funding over the different MS of the Programme area must be sought by projects. The programme considers value-for-money to be very important, so project budgets should be proportionate to the results they will deliver.

Expenditure is considered eligible if it complies with European and national rules and the established¹ legal limits and if it is directly related to the project and observes the principles of economic efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Eligible expenditure shall be incurred and paid within the set eligibility period.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 - Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation laying down subject matter and scope, thematic concentration and investment priorities, programming, monitoring and evaluation, eligibility, management, control and designation, financial management and common output indicators.



Co-financing rate and national match funds

As general rule, the programme offers a maximum co-financing rate of 75% of the total project budget, which is reimbursed by certified payment claims. If project activities are regarded as State Aid relevant², restrictions might be applied (lower co-financing rate, ceiling of ERDF contribution, etc.)

Projects selection

All project proposals are assessed against eligibility and quality assessment criteria. The received applications are assessed following a standardised procedure, which safeguards the principles of transparency and equal treatment. After a formal/administrative compliance check using eligibility criteria (I), eligible proposals are evaluated against strategic and operational assessment award criteria (II).

I - Eligibility criteria

Formal/administrative requirements to be observed are:

Nr	Criteria	Yes/No
1	The application was submitted within the deadline set through the Programme's website	
2	All sections of the Full Application Form have been completed	
3	The project involves at least 3 partners located in Atlantic Area regions and from 3 different Member-states	
4	The Lead Partner is an organisation within the eligible programme	
5	The Lead Partner is a public, not profit or public-similar organisation	
6	The project has chosen a single Programme priority and objective open for funding for this call	
7	The project title and brief summary are provided in the 4 Programme languages and are consistent in the four Programme languages versions and with Projects description details.	
8	Documents have been provided by all the partners (see below " <i>documents to be provided for the submission</i> ")	

² Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid and Commission Regulation (EU) N°651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty.



Applicants must be aware that the noncompliance with one or several eligibility criteria leads to an application to be considered as not eligible and, consequently, not assessed.

This eligibility check will be done until end of June.

II – Quality award criteria

Applications passing the checks described in the above points will enter into the quality assessment phase. Quality award criteria to be observed are:

Selection criteria	Weight
Strategic criteria (60%)	
Consistency and policy relevance	5
Transnationality and cooperation intensity	5
Partnership	5
Relevance to the Programme intervention logic	15
Sustainability & Results	15
Value for money	15
Operational criteria (40%)	
Work plan: main outputs	5
Work plan: work packages	10
Work plan: risk management	10
Work plan: communication	5
Work plan: budget	10

Scoring of the Award criteria

Based on the JS analysis, each selection criteria assessment item will be scored on a 1 to 4 scale as follows:

4	Excellent	The application fulfils the criteria to an excellent level and provides clear and coherent information
3	Good	The application complies with the criteria; however, the provided information includes minor shortcomings
2	Weak	The application has serious shortcomings in fulfilling the criteria and/or the provided information is of low quality
1	Insufficient	The application does not fulfil the criteria or information required is missing (e.g. the full application addresses issues that are not relevant for the cooperation programme; the proposed activities are out of the programme's scope such as, for example, pure research activities or pure training activities; the information in the full application is unclear)

In order to ensure equal treatment of all the proposals, the technical assessment is carried out by the JS on the basis of the information provided. No additional clarification will be requested during the technical assessment process.



Each proposal will, then, be ranked based on a technical assessment score going from 0 to 100, according to the weights presented in the table for selection criteria, which results from an aggregation of the full application criteria scores. In cases of an equal score of project proposals (tie break situation), the project proposal that was submitted first on to the system will be ranked higher.

Notification of decision

The Programme Monitoring Committee may:

1. Approve a project with or without recommendations; -Recommendations are given to improve the project and it is strongly suggested the project adopts the recommendations from the MC.
2. Not approve a project;
3. Approve a project with conditions; All conditions set by the MC are strictly time bound and must be met. The JS will check all conditions are fully met, before referring the project to the MC for the final approval or rejection of the project.

A general comment highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each full application will also be provided. National Authorities/contact points must provide the JS with all relevant information about constraints resulting from national law, regulations and policies that should be taken into consideration.

The JS submits a technical assessment report to MC members, containing the aforementioned information. The MC is the body responsible for the selection of projects based on the JS technical report and the quality assessments carried out by each MS.

Documents to be provided for the submission

Each partner will have to submit:

- A Co-financing Declaration as the template provided by the Programme, signed by the organization's legal representative;
- A probative/ official template provided by the Programme indicating that the signing Legal Representative is in capacity to commit the organization;
- For those projects involving partners from countries that do not belong to the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme, the template provided by the Programme for this purpose must be signed



by the partner indicating that the relevant and entitled national authority responsible for certification³ has been contacted.

Language use

Applicants can communicate with the Joint Secretariat in any of the 4 Programme languages (Portuguese, Spanish, French or English). However, the project application form must compulsorily be completed in English and optionally in any other Programme language. The project title and the brief description shall be compulsorily completed in all four Programme languages. It is important to take time to get this right and to use the wider project partnership to help with this; poor translations cannot be assessed properly and suggest a lack of close partnership working.

Information and assistance

More details about the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme are available at: www.atlanticarea.eu

Documents and facilities available on the Programme website:

- Atlantic Area Cooperation Programme;
- Programme Manual;
- Application form;
- Projects idea tool.

It is also possible to contact representatives of the National Contact Points/Correspondents located in each Atlantic Area Member State or the Joint Secretariat (js@atlanticarea.eu) based in Porto. Contact information is available on the Programme website.

³ Article 20-2 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation laying down subject matter and scope, thematic concentration and investment priorities, programming, monitoring and evaluation, eligibility, management, control and designation, financial management and common output indicators – Contact list is available [here](#).