



INTERREG ATLANTIC AREA 2021-2027

Draft document on 2nd CALL FOR PROPOSALS

PRIORITY 4: A better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic area

TYPE OF CALL: Call for projects

PROJECT: The Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project

ERDF allocation: 3.750.000€

V5 October 2024

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1. Introduction

Why a new type of projects linked to governance?

In the period 2021-27, the Interreg Atlantic Area (AA) Programme decided to provide funding to support “Better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic Area” under priority 4, Interreg Specific Objective 1 (ISO 1), by primarily addressing governance. The main goal is to conceive facilitators to enhance cooperation in the eligible areas of the AA Programme and tools to promote efficiency in implementing the Programme's strategies and objectives.

The objective is to provide more visibility and better assessment of valuable project results, feeding into existing or potential governance networks or initiatives to inspire or influence public policies and decisions, and policy makers. This goal requires a better identification and assessment of results/outputs along the implementation phase of the programme, improved coordination, and complementarity with other sectorial/thematic key actors in the cooperation area, with the Atlantic Maritime Strategy, and possibly with other European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Programmes, national regional Programmes, and mainstream programmes.

For 2021-2027, the challenge of the AA Programme is to develop a new type of project able to make, through a constructive approach and actions, a step further on the results enhancement and their diffusion.

The project should be focused on environmental topics, such as (not exhaustive list):

- Integration of digital technologies to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of the blue economy and tourism sectors.
- Promoting cooperation among stakeholders to address common environmental challenges.
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy production, particularly in marine and maritime sectors.
- Enhancing capacities for circular economy implementation and engaging citizens in sustainable consumption practices.
- Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Prevention.
- Protection and Preservation of Nature and Biodiversity.
- Implementing sustainable tourism strategies.

Why did the Programme Member States decide to focus on “environment”?

The AA Programme is anchored on several EU policy initiatives, including the European Blue Growth Strategy, the European Green Deal, the Territorial Agenda 2030, and the EU Atlantic Maritime Strategy. The mission is to be at the forefront of the transition to a unique, carbon neutral and climate resilient Atlantic Area Region.

2. The call ISO 1 “Better governance of cooperation in Atlantic Area” in details

2.1 What are the AA programme’s global expectations about the “Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project”?

The goal is to amplify the valuable results outside the Interreg “bubble” through a supportive “Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project”, creating conditions to exchange on environmental topics.

The “Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project” will be an umbrella project expected to:

- 1) **Carry out a joint results dissemination** by identifying common objectives, setting up the conditions for results reusing, synergies development and better coordination between projects.
- 2) **Facilitate the transfer of practices and results** to other actors and territories, to be included in local, regional, national, and European policies and strategies.
- 3) **Increase coordination and dialogue between stakeholders operating in the Atlantic Area** based on this knowledge, experience, and results, providing inputs to **the AA Programme’s** ongoing and future development.

The project must implement an **effective communication** plan that should be extended beyond internal stakeholders to encompass a diverse range of audiences, including policymakers, global stakeholders, and the broader public. Clear and transparent communication with policymakers is essential for advocating the project's goal, garnering support, and ensuring alignment with regulatory frameworks and strategic priorities. Additionally, engaging with a global audience allows for the dissemination of project insights, best practices, and outcomes on an international scale, fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and potential replication in other contexts. By prioritizing effective communication strategies and channels tailored to the needs of different audiences, the project's impact can be maximised as well as visibility and long-term sustainability.

2.2 What types of activities are expected for the Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project”?

To achieve the main goals, this project must include the following activities:

- **Working groups**, specially focused on the topics identified in section 1, also considering projects from other programme priorities related to environmental issues, blue and green. The aim is to capitalise on results for specific strategic topics in the Atlantic area along with key stakeholders, networks, and initiatives.
- **Meetings** dedicated to the promotion of better coordination with the Atlantic Strategy and other relevant stakeholders in the Atlantic Area.
- **Studies and data collection production about strategic matters for the Atlantic Area Programme, related to the environmental challenges as a horizontal approach, and considering the conclusions and recommendations from the Atlantic Maritime Strategy thematic pillars.**

Details on activities and target audience are described in the following table.

1- Carry out a joint results dissemination	Related activities	Target audience
Identification and analysis of knowledge, experiences, and project results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify and analyse the project’s results from past and current projects related to the topic mentioned in section 1. ✓ Develop a results database / digital library of programme results and deliverables that reinforce the visibility of the programme. ✓ Analyse and decide if the project’s results could be used elsewhere. ✓ Create linkages between projects addressing similar issues to promote complementarities. ✓ Maximise the dissemination of the collected knowledge to targeted stakeholders and networks 	<p>Programme area.</p> <p>Programme partners of selected AA projects 21-27 and 14-20 and other relevant stakeholders</p>
2. Facilitate the transfer of practices and results	Related activities	Target audience
Encourage the transfer of results and practices to key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Set up activities to gather, transfer and amplify project results. ✓ Establish relationships with relevant decision makers with the aim of transfer results into public policies (local, regional, national, and European) ✓ Organise joint events to share previous experiences and results transfer (including networking) to stakeholders and or/decision-makers to amplify the projects’ results. ✓ Assess the challenges faced and the benefits of the transfer of practices to improve the process along the Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance project lifetime. ✓ For the “single” AA projects part of the community created by the Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance project, facilitate their abilities to better access new contacts, networks and improve their skills in communication and/or advocacy to better promote their own project results. 	<p>Programme area.</p> <p>Local, regional, and national and European authorities</p>

3. Increase coordination and dialogue between stakeholders	Related activities	Target audience
Increase coordination and dialogue with relevant stakeholders in the AA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strengthening coordination between existing Atlantic networks and strategies to achieve better governance. ✓ Promote initiatives with other projects and ERDF programmes to address common challenges. ✓ Facilitate thematic exchanges with European and international institutions. ✓ Development of joint transnational action plans. ✓ Develop a strategy paper with recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on how project results might be included regional/national and European policies already in place, such as the Atlantic Maritime Strategy • Provide inputs contributing to improve the programme’s ongoing and future development, activities, and projects programming. 	<p>Atlantic area.</p> <p>Main stakeholders including national and transnational authorities as well as representatives of civil society thematic mainstream programmes and EU agencies.</p> <p>EU DG (e.g. Mare and ENV), EU Parliament committees and MEP Committee of Regions, Economic and social Council</p>

2.3 What are the expected outputs and results for the “Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project”?

2.3.1. What are the expected outputs of the “Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project”?

The “Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project” should:

- ✓ contribute to draft policy implementing measures and recommendations, prepare Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs), improve procedures, implement transferring and mainstreaming plans;
- ✓ Contribute to reinforce existing networks of authorities and stakeholders, strengthening coordination between existing Atlantic networks and strategies to achieve better governance (e.g., maximise investments through complementary and/or common interventions as well as capitalisation activities.

Focus on the related output indicators available in the Programme.

1. Corresponding output indicator “Jointly developed solutions” (RCO 116)

This indicator counts the number of jointly developed solutions between different projects or with

external Programme stakeholders that contribute to improve cooperation governance for the eligible area. To be computed for the indicator, an identified action should include indications on the type of cooperation and engaged projects or stakeholders. A jointly developed action implies the involvement of more than one organization.

Jointly developed actions, resulting from cooperation within funded projects, are needed to support better cooperation governance and to:

- ✓ Establish conditions for synergy and coordination between projects,
- ✓ Implement mainstreaming strategies in local, regional, national, and European policies in partnership with relevant institutions,
- ✓ Support institutional coordination between regional, national, and European authorities/networks and between ETC managing authorities, initiatives, and strategies in the Atlantic,
- ✓ Set up long-lasting conditions for a permanent institutional dialogue.

Targeted actions refer to:

- ✓ Actions related to the support of transferring and mainstreaming.

The target value for the Atlantic Area Programme is 5.

2. Corresponding output indicator "Organisations cooperating across borders" (RCO87)

The indicator counts the organisations cooperating formally.

Main target groups are represented by: regional and national authorities, networks of decision makers, protected areas, energy and environmental agencies, business management organisations/agencies, Universities/research centres, NGOs/local communities and associations, which work on enhancing synergies and coordination between thematic projects and supporting institutional coordination towards the Programme missions.

Cooperation between organisations across borders is essential to ensure the optimisation of resources for a more significant positive impact on territories and the harmonisation of policies for better territorial cohesion.

This output indicator will allow the measurement of cooperation between organisations, not only within the Programme area but also in the wider Atlantic Area territory.

The target value for the Atlantic Area Programme is 50.

3. Corresponding output indicator “Participations in joint actions across borders participations” (RCO81).

This indicator counts the number of participations in joint actions across borders implemented in the supported projects. Joint actions across borders could include:

- ✓ Exchange activities or exchange visits organized with partners across borders.
- ✓ Participations in joint actions (i.e., number of persons attending a joint action across borders, e.g., citizens, volunteers, students, pupils, public officials, etc.) are counted for each joint action organised based on the attendance list.

The target value for the Atlantic Area Programme is 5981.

2.3.2. What are the expected results?

Actions should contribute in a coordinated manner to:

- ✓ A more coordinated approach to thematic issues with local, regional, national, and European policies thanks to collectively empowered results of Interreg Atlantic Area projects,
- ✓ Increased institutional capacity of Atlantic public authorities to transform public policies, governance, and transnational cooperation (e.g., maximise investments through complementary and/or common interventions as well as capitalisation activities),
- ✓ For the projects for which the results are considered valuable and transferable, increase their availability to enhance and spread-out,
- ✓ Increased coordination and cooperation between regional, national, and supranational institutions/bodies and programmes acting in the area, as well as with strategies and initiatives.

Focus on the related results indicators available in the programme, two result indicators have been selected by the Programme for the ISO 1 Governance Priority:

1. Result indicator “Solutions taken up or up scaled by organisations” (RCO 104)

The indicator counts the number of solutions, other than legal or administrative solutions, developed by supported projects and taken up or upscaled during the implementation of the project or within one year after project completion. At the Programme level, to be counted for this indicator, the solutions shall have been effectively taken up or upscaled or be at the initial stage of uptake/upscale, by a given organization, during the implementation of the project or at the project closure.

Concrete solutions resulting from cooperation among governance projects and external stakeholders are crucial to increase cooperation and better governance in the Atlantic.

However, the concrete take-up or upscale of developed solutions by relevant organisations is needed to impact governance processes in different territories.

This result indicator will concretely reflect the effective uptake of solutions, contributing to achieve the Programme's specific objective on Governance, and in parallel, monitor the territories where the Programme's results have been adopted/applied. The target value for the Atlantic Area Programme is 4.

2. *Result Indicator "Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion" (RCR 84).*

The indicator counts the organisations cooperating across borders after completing the supported projects.

The target value for the Atlantic Area Programme is 25.

2.4 What are the suited partnerships and partners for the "Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project"?

The Project partnership must include full partners (ERDF beneficiaries) and associated partners,¹ all with proven capacity:

- to analyse projects' results both on quality and transferability,
- to have a proven institutional recognition and influence, including at national or European levels, able to enhance the development of synergies between Atlantic Area's projects, programmes, and organisations outside the Interreg context having a specific relevance in the thematic field concerned,
- to manage or contribute to better transfer of results towards new territories, stakeholders, or organisations,
- to initiate agreements or memorandums of understanding involving relevant stakeholders at regional, national, and European levels.

In the framework of the Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance project, the presence of associated partners is essential to ensure a broader project territorial and institutional relevance, wider dissemination, and tangible potential impact (analysis of results, development of synergies, transfer of results).

The partnership responsibilities are those described in the Programme Manual.

¹ Institutions wishing to participate in the project without ERDF funding are considered "associated partners" for which no limit of participation is set; these are not considered regarding the minimum partnership composition.

For this specific project, the Lead partner must:

- Have the technical thematic capacity and, at the same time, appropriate institutional recognition to access decision makers networks at regional, national, or European levels.
- Have experience as LP in Interreg programmes/partnerships to assure multidimensional governance approaches and linkage to existing networks and other active cooperation schemes.
- Have institutional partners at different levels to assure multidimensional governance approaches and linkage to existing networks and other active cooperation schemes. (e.g., see the reference paper “The Charter for Multi-level Governance in Europe”)²
- Be able to identify and mobilise key external players to support the uptake results to coordinate practices and policies and support the setting-up of new policies to amplify the outreach.
- Have a deep knowledge of the Atlantic Area programme missions and projects managing procedures.

Partners are expected to have:

- a high capacity to stimulate networking related to environmental issues;
- analytical skills in this thematic field, connect easily with all relevant stakeholders;
- high communication and capacity building skills;
- a solid institutional experience linked to environmental issues.

Associated partners

Organisations can be added to the partnership as associated partners. To facilitate the accurate and constant participation of these partners, the Programme will allow full partners to take charge of the cost of travel and accommodation for associated partners, exceptionally for this Call.

Given the ambition of the Programme to extend its impact beyond its geographical and institutional area, in addition to associated partners from the Programme area, **associated partners from outside the Programme area are welcome.**

Nature of full partners

All partners mentioned below are suited to participate in the Governance projects:

- ✓ Public authorities,

² <https://aer.eu/charter-for-multilevel-governance-in-europe/>, accessed on January 29, 2024.

- ✓ Specialised agencies: e.g., environmental agencies, structures in charge of protected areas, energy agencies,
- ✓ Universities, higher education institutions and research centres,
- ✓ NGOs, local communities, and associations,
- ✓ Relevant thematic Networks,
- ✓ Networks of decision makers,
- ✓ Institutional networks.

Programme goal related to this call

This document relates to Priority 4, “A better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic area”.

This call aims to receive proposals to support better coordination among different policy levels approaching the topics identified in section 1 and increase the institutional capacity of Atlantic Area authorities.

The proposals will enhance the coordination between multi-level bodies, the Atlantic Strategy, and initiatives in the Atlantic Area.

The project selected by the Programme Monitoring Committee (MC) will be guided by the Working Group dedicated to this call (MA/JS, member states) to adjust the timetable and first steps of the workplan.

3. Call technical specifications

3.1 Type of Call

Open call for proposals.

3.2 Financial allocation and project duration

The indicative financial allocation for this call for proposals is around 3,75 M€ in ERDF and 5M€ in total (Interreg funds + national co-financing).

Considering the ERDF allocated, only one project will be selected.

The project will be programmed for a five-year duration, approximately (more information in the technical

specifications attached to the document).

3.3 Expected partnership structure

- The project partnership must be set up with partners from the 4 different Atlantic Area countries: France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain.
- Full partners by project should be between 10 and 15, at least 2 by each MS. The role of the Lead Partner can only be held by: Public organizations; Organisations governed by public law; Not-for-profit private organisations.
- Profit making private partners will not be allowed to participate in this call.
- One public authority by MS (as a full or associated partner) relevant in thematic addressed.

3.4 Main aspects to consider in the project construction

The following recommendations should be considered when building the proposal and its budget:

- ✓ Keep in mind the key position of the “Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance project” in the programme governance as the operation of strategic importance (OSI) in this programming period;
- ✓ Ensure a broad coverage of the Atlantic Area and beyond;
- ✓ Identify what has been already produced in previous periods and the current programme period and provide proposals on how to capitalise /valorise on it;
- ✓ Provide inputs and support to the Atlantic Area Programme’s implementation through the review of activities and results to feed ongoing and future programming orientations;
- ✓ Foresee resources (human and financial) for the coordination of activities between the governance project, the Atlantic Area projects providing results, the Monitoring Committee, the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat;
- ✓ Provide a detailed annual working plan for the activities that will be developed (specifications);
- ✓ Remain flexible to adjust to opportunities and constraints;
- ✓ Demonstrate the partnership capacities to implement the types of activities, as the workplan will have to remain adjustable to enable true coordination between projects or groups (e.g., relevant projects,

programmes and stakeholders);

- ✓ Involve the whole partnership in the proposal set-up. Organising the distribution of the roles and tasks according to the relevant fitting between activities to be done, thematic or technical skills, institutional recognition and influence of each organisations involved.

3.5 Project Key dates

Project starting date: 1st Half 2025

Project ending date: 30 June 2029

Duration: Approximately 52 months

Working Group reviews must be performed:

- **Six months** from the project starting date: a review of the organisational capacity of the project concerning the start-up and setting up of the activities and the project's partnership, the difficulties, or new opportunities, should be performed. The review must also be a way to have institutional insight and dialogue.
- **Every year**: to assess the project's annual work plan foreseen against the activities and achievements, partners' participation, physical and financial implementation rate, and update of the following 12-month work plan; the possibility of adjustments and modifications.

3.6 Call timeline

The provisional timetable is as follows:

KEY STEPS	DATES (to be revised)
Opening of the call	November 4 th 2024
Questions & answer sessions	November 13 th 2024
Close	December 20 th 2024 (1 pm, Lisbon time)
Assessment of proposals by the JS and Working group	All January/February 2025

Selection and approval by the MC	During January/February 2025
Contracting procedures	From February 2025 onwards
Starting date	From MC decision (foreseen March 2025)
Six months review	September 2025
1 st assessment exercise	March 2025
2 nd assessment exercise	September 2026
3 rd assessment exercise	March 2027
4 th assessment exercise	September 2028
5 th assessment exercise	March 2029

The above schedule should be considered as indicative.

3.7 Submission of proposals, assessment, and selection procedure

This section details the procedure for proposal submission procedure, assessment, and selection process in the framework of the Atlantic Area Call 2 Governance - Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance project. In addition to the present specifications, a dedicated section in the Programme Manual will be available, and all the documents relevant for preparing the application will be available on the Programme website (call dedicated page link).

3.7.1 Assessment of project proposals

The eligibility check will be carried out to verify whether an application meets the minimum criteria established by the AA Programme.

Proposals not fulfilling one of these conditions will be considered ineligible and will not be further processed. Lead partners will be informed of the outcome of this first check. Eligible proposals will go under quality assessment.

Eligibility criteria

Check that an application meets the criteria set by the Programme to be eligible for assessment.

	Eligibility criteria	Description	Check by the JS
1	All compulsory sections of the application form are filled with the requested information in English.	All fields in the application form are mandatory.	Correctly filled with the requested and relevant information.

2	The project fulfils minimum requirements for the partnership.	The project involves at least 2 full partners by each MS: France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain.	The JS checks that the information provided by the project is correct (consistency of the information declared in the AF).
3	The LP of the submitted proposal is a public, non-profit or governed by public law (public equivalent body, according to the public procurement law) located in the eligible territory to the Programme.	The LP is not a profit-making private organization and it is located in the AA eligible area.	The JS checks that the information provided by the project is correct (consistency of the information declared in the AF).
4	Documents requested have been provided by all the partners. These are signed and attached to the application form, such as LP and partner statements.	LP and Partners must provide a set of documents referred in the Terms of Reference.	The JS checks that the information provided by the project is correct (consistency of the information declared in the AF).
5	There are not “profit making private partners” in the partnership.	Profit making private partners will not be allowed to participate in this call.	The JS checks that the information provided by the project is correct (consistency of the information declared in the AF).

List of mandatory documents that must be uploaded on the SIGI platform in the application phase:

- Lead partner declaration.
- Partner declaration.
- Associated partners declaration (if applicable);
- Legal representative (the person who signs has the legal capacity);
- Legal entity appointed representative (LEAR) when the legal representative name another person to be the legal. (if applicable)
- Legal Entity Public law Body
- Solvency declaration (if applicable)
- VAT statement.
- Bank statement.
- Beneficial Owner Declaration
- Declaration of compliance with the do no significant harm (DNSH)

- State-Aid Statement
- Only for SME self-assessment questionnaire

AF (Application Form)

Project proposals failing to meet at least one of the requirements above will be deemed not eligible for assessment.

Quality Assessment Criteria

Quality Assessment Criteria			
Strategic assessment criteria	65 Points	Operational assessment criteria	35 Points
Project relevance according to the call goals and expectations	20	Work plan	15
Cooperation added value, Increasing coordination and dialogue with relevant stakeholders in the AA	20	Communication, synergies and complementarities, and Risk management	10
Project intervention logic	10	Budget	10
Partnership	15		
Strategic assessment total: 65 points		Operational assessment total: 35 points	
Assessment total: 100 points			

After the assessment, all the proposals will be ranked according to their final technical overall score. A final decision on project approval or rejection is taken by the MC.