INTERREG ATLANTIC AREA

2021-2027

4th CALL FOR PROPOSALS GUIDELINES
ALL 4 PRIORITIES

ERDF allocation: initial indicative allocation of approximately €7 million

Priority	Call 4 - Available ERDF
Priority 1 Blue innovation and competitiveness	781.829,18€
Priority 2 Blue/Green environment	3.766.745,87€
Priority 3 Blue sustainable and social tourism & culture	1.857.199,71€
Priority 4 A better governance for cooperation	503.493,62€

Further amount **up to EUR 4 million** may potentially become available through decommitments from projects approved under previous calls.

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As a complement to the call's specific Terms of Reference (ToR), these guidelines provide a framework for completing and submitting your Application Form (AF).

Further to this document, you should also:

- ✓ Consult the Programme Manual on the programme website https://www.atlanticarea.eu/;
- ✓ Participate in the info sessions foreseen in the ToR (The sessions are recorded and will be available on the Programme's website);
- ✓ If any doubts arise, please contact the Atlantic Area Joint Secretariat (JS) or National Authorities (NA) in your country for more information.

Main aspects to consider in the project construction:

- ✓ Ensure a broad coverage of the Atlantic Area and beyond;
- ✓ Identify what has been already produced in previous programming periods and the current programme period;
- ✓ 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;
- ✓ A risk management plan should be developed, to avoid potential problems/ threats.

Project key dates:

- <u>Project starting date</u>: 1st Half of 2027
- <u>Duration</u>: 24 months
- <u>Project mandatory ending date</u>: 30th June 2029

Project starting date: Following approval and contracting/activation. Lot A projects are expected to start in early 2027; Lot B projects may start later, subject to the availability of additional ERDF resources.

Indicative duration: Up to 24 months. The duration may be reduced, particularly for projects activated from the reserve list, to comply with the Programme timeline

Applicants should ensure that the proposal clearly falls within one or more of the project objectives supported by the Fourth Call: capitalisation and scaling-up, innovation transfer, governance frameworks, decision-support tools, and/or light pilot actions. Please refer to Annex 1 of the ToR.

1. Project identification

Project info

The project must start during the first half of 2027, with an indicative duration up to 24 months and a mandatory end date of 30 June 2029.

Total budget

The ERDF co-financing rate is up to 75%, with an ERDF contribution ranging **from EUR 0.4 million to EUR 0.8 million** per project for this call.

Project Summary

The AF must be completed in English. However, the project Summary must be provided in the 4 Programme's Languages. It should be a project overview starting with a simple sentence on what the project is and how innovative it is. Then you should provide a concise overview of the project, including:

- ✓ the common Atlantic Area challenge, need or shared asset addressed;
- ✓ the selected project approach: capitalisation, scaling-up, innovation transfer, governance framework, decision-support tool or light pilot action;
- ✓ the overall and specific objectives;
- ✓ the main activities, outputs and expected results;
- ✓ the transnational added value;
- ✓ the target groups and territories expected to benefit;
- ✓ the project's contribution to the selected Programme priority, specific objective and objectives of the Call.

Project documents

Project documents will be requested at a later stage **after the project approval**.

2. Project description

2.1 Project overall objective

- ✓ The overall objective should establish the broader context for what your project aims to accomplish.

2.2 Project relevance and context

- The territorial common challenges/opportunities/needs - Explain the shared Atlantic Area challenge addressed and how the proposal responds to the rationale and objectives of the Fourth Call, with a clear focus on capitalisation, scaling-up, transfer, governance and tangible policy or operational impact

- What is new about your project approach - Please explain the project novelty and explain how the approach goes beyond existing practice in the sector/Programme area/participating countries.
- Transnational cooperation needed - Please explain why the project's objectives can only be efficiently reached by acting through transnational cooperation and what the added value is.
- Who will benefit from your project outputs and results? – It is a key question that focuses on identifying the stakeholders or groups who will gain value from the work produced by a project. Understanding who the beneficiaries are is crucial for ensuring that the project meets its objectives and has a lasting impact.
- Project contribution to broader strategies and policies - Please provide detailed plans for developing policy recommendations or guidelines based on project findings. Identify target audiences for policy recommendations and strategies for knowledge sharing.
- Building on available knowledge and results- Identify the existing results, tools, methodologies, practices or solutions on which the proposal builds, including relevant projects and programming periods. Explain what will be reused, improved, adapted, transferred, scaled up or embedded in governance/policy frameworks and which partners bring the relevant experience.

2.3 Project partnership

Describe the structure of your partnership and explain why these partners are needed to implement the project and achieve the project's objectives. The description should focus on the complementarities between partners and clearly explain the structure of the partnership, avoiding individual descriptions of partners. Moreover, describe how the associated partners will be involved. Individual roles and competences of partners are to be detailed in Sections 3 WP and 4 Partnership.

When constructing the project partnership, please keep in mind the information provided in the Call's ToR.

2.4 Long-terms effects and durability

- Ownership/durability - describe who will ensure the financial and institutional support, including maintenance for outputs and, if applicable, for the most important deliverables developed by your project. Outline plans for ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes beyond the project duration. Identify mechanisms for institutionalizing good practices in capitalization.
- Lasting effects/dissemination - Outputs and deliverables should be made available and used by the relevant target groups (project partners or other stakeholders) after the project's lifetime to have a lasting effect on the territory. Please describe how the outputs and deliverables will remain available and will be taken up or upscaled by the project partners. Identify potential long-term impacts and legacy.
- Capitalisation/Transferability - describe how outputs and deliverables could be adapted or further developed to be used by additional target groups or rolled out in other territories beyond the partnership. Explain how communication and capitalisation activities will ensure that relevant groups are aware of the outputs and deliverables:

✓ Describe strategies for engaging relevant stakeholders in capitalization improvement efforts;

- ✓ Outline plans for building institutional and human capacities related to capitalization;
- ✓ Specify training programs, workshops or knowledge-sharing activities focused on capitalization.

3. Work packages

Break down the project activities into coherent and manageable work packages (WPs). A maximum of four WPs is allowed, excluding WP0. However, the work plan must remain proportionate to the scope of the call and be realistic in view of the maximum implementation period, limited partnership size and available budget.

Given that this call is specially focused on capitalisation and scaling-up, innovation transfer, governance frameworks, decision-support tools and/or light pilot actions, applicants are strongly encouraged to structure the project around a single thematic work package (in addition to WP0), clearly focused on the specific objectives, activities and results of the proposed project. Additional thematic WPs should only be included where clearly justified by the nature and scope of the project.

Work packages should be thematic and results oriented. Project management and communication should not be established as separate work packages; instead, the related activities should be integrated into the thematic WP(s), as appropriate.

- Each work package should have the following:
  - ✓ Title,
  - ✓ Duration: Start and end dates;
  - ✓ Implementation summary (Description of the activities to be developed);
  - ✓ Project specific objective (description of the WP specific objective),
  - ✓ Communication objectives and target audience;
  - ✓ Work package overall description and partners involved (clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each partner organization; specify the contributions expected from each partner);
  - ✓ Investment list for light pilots - If applicable, they are only to be foreseen if necessary for the implementation of project activities linked to pilot actions. Investments shall have a demonstrative character. For each investment exceeding EUR 25.000 total cost, a clear and concise description needs to be provided. This shall include a justification of the investment, its physical location, information on its environmental sustainability and risks, technical and legal requirements, and ownership. Heavy infrastructure and large equipment are not eligible (e.g. construction works, acquisition of vessels/cars or heavy machinery). Pilot-related costs must be proportionate, demonstrative and clearly linked to adaptation, validation, replication or operational uptake
  - ✓ Project result(s) - corresponding to the immediate effect and change compared to the initial situation, which the project intends to achieve through its outputs. It relates to the challenges tackled. It must be measurable in line with the Programme's result indicators and must have a target value to be reached by the end of the project;
  - ✓ Activities list (no more than 4 activities by WP are allowed);
  - ✓ Outputs and deliverables that must contribute to the specific Programme output indicators;

- ✓ Set realistic and achievable targets for all selected output and result indicators, taking into account the project's scope, activities, duration, partnership and budget. Targets must be clearly and duly explained. They must strictly comply with the Programme's definition of each indicator, including the applicable unit of measurement, counting method and other requirements set out in the Programme Manual.

4. Partnership

General aspects to be considered when creating the partnership:

- ✓ The partnership must cover the four Atlantic Area Member States and eligible regions: France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, in accordance with the minimum partnership requirements established in the ToR;
- ✓ The roles and responsibilities of each partner organization and expected contributions should be clearly defined;
- ✓ The application shall involve at least 4 public bodies/not-for-profit private organisations from each of the four Member States and eligible regions (France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain). Profit-making private organisations may also participate as full partners. Lead Partner organisations must comply with the eligibility conditions established in the ToR and must be in the Programme eligible area;
- ✓ Full partners (with ERDF contribution) should be between Should involve 4 to 12 full partners maximum. The role of the Lead Partner can only be held by public organizations; Organisations governed by public law or Not-for-profit private organisations;
- ✓ Regarding the project team, the Lead Partner must provide a team, both in terms of number and skills, to carry out the activities. The human resources allocated must have, among others:
  - Prior experience in planning and conducting EU transnational cooperation projects/programes;
  - In-depth knowledge of issues relating to EU transnational cooperation, particularly regarding the political framework, cooperation projects and the management of cooperation at project;
  - Strong data analysis skills.

4.1 Partner information

Please complete this section with accurate information. In this section, most of the mistakes identified are related to section 4.1.10. Vat Recovery.

The documents will be requested at a later stage after the project approval.

4.2 Contacts

In this section, keep in mind that:

The contact person must be the one who manages the project because all communication from the Programme will be done through that person.

The Legal representative is the person who is entitled to sign the documents (e.g., Partner declaration, state aid declaration, etc.) on behalf the organisation. The Legal Representative declaration will be requested at a later stage **after the project approval**.

The financial manager is the person who financially manages the project.

4.3 Bank account

Please provide the requested information. Supporting documentation to confirm the data provided will be requested following project approval.

4.4 Partner motivation and contribution

- ✓ Which of the partner's thematic competences and experiences are relevant to the project? What are the institutional role and policy addressing capacity of the partner?
- ✓ Please demonstrate, clearly and in summary, the link between your budget and your role on the different project activities.
- ✓ Please describe the organization's experience participating in and/or managing EU co-financed projects.
- ✓ For the project Lead Partner - please describe the organization's capacity and experience in managing and coordinating EU co-financed projects or other international projects. For the ex. For the project partner, coordinating communication activities (i.e., taking over the role of project communication manager), please describe here what are your organisation's relevant communication competences and experiences.
- ✓ If applicable, please describe the role of the associated partner in the project and why its involvement is important for achieving the project specific objectives (mandatory).
- ✓ In the case of partners from outside the programme area: Which is the added value of including this partner outside the programme area in the partnership?
- ✓ Please confirm that the partner is aware of the FLC Controller requirements in its country and the feasibility of their application for the AA area.

4.5 State Aid information

Please provide the requested information. Supporting documentation to confirm the data provided will be requested following project approval.

For more information on the subject, please refer to section 3.2 State Aid of the Programme Manual.

4.6 Partner co-financing

In this section, the most significant need for understanding relates to expenses incurred outside or by partners that operate outside the programme eligible area.

Expenditure incurred outside the Programme cooperation area and outside the EU should have been expressly included in the AF (workplan-activities and budget 4.6.6).

Costs in the category of infrastructure and works relating to a structure located outside the

Programme cooperation area are not eligible.

4.7 Partner by budget line and year

Most of the information related to this point is available in the programme manual section 3.1.6 Cost categories.

However, we would like to stress that if you decide to use real costs in the cost category of travel and accommodation, this option must be duly justified in this section 4.4.2 - Describe the partner's role, responsibilities and contribution to the project.

4.8 Physical investment

All partners including eligible equipment or infrastructure-related costs in their budget must complete this section. Applicants must note that heavy infrastructure and large equipment are not eligible under the Fourth Call. Any investment linked to a light pilot action must be small-scale, necessary, proportionate and demonstrative.

5. Project management and communication

5.1 How will you coordinate and manage your project?

Please describe how the project management on the strategic and operational levels will be carried out, including the set-up of management structures, responsibilities, and procedures. Please also explain how the internal communication within the partnership will be organised. Describe the reporting processes at the level of partners towards the lead partner. Describe the approach/methodology to be used.

5.2 Which measures will you take to ensure quality in your project?

Describe the planned approach and processes for quality management, i.e., how the quality of deliverables and outputs will be monitored and ensured and indicate the responsible partner(s). If you plan to conduct any type of project evaluation, please describe its purpose and scope.

- Define the monitoring and evaluation framework;
- Specify the key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure project progress and success;
- Identify evaluation methods and tools.

5.3 How will you communicate your project?

Please describe how your project's communication objectives, as outlined in the work plan, will help achieving your project's main result(s). Why is communication important? Which common tactics, channels and tools will help the partnership to reach out to and involve its target audiences? How will the project communication coordinator ensure that all project partners are involved and contribute to communication? Is there a well-structured communication plan in place to raise awareness about the project and its outcomes? Please identify target audiences and dissemination channels and detail any planned events workshops or conferences.

5.4 How will your project risk management plan be set up?

Identify potential risks and challenges related to the activities that will be implemented. Has the project identified potential performance /schedule risks and developed strategies to mitigate them? Is there a monitoring plan allowing to make the necessary adjustments to ensure project success? Is there a contingency plan to address unforeseen circumstances without compromising project objectives? Has the project budget considered potential risks and uncertainties that may impact project costs? Is there a robust financial management system in place to ensure the proper use of project funds and compliance with Programme rules? Please develop a risk mitigation strategy to address identified risks. Also, please consult Programme Manual section 2.9 “Risk Management”.

5.5 Cooperation criteria

Please select the cooperation criteria that apply to your project and include a brief explanation. Please note that the joint development, joint implementation, and joint financing criteria are mandatory.

5.6 Horizontal principles

Please describe the reporting processes at the level of partners towards the lead partner.

5.7 Project monitoring environment indicator

In addition to the Programme output and result indicators, applicants must also provide expected targets for the relevant environmental indicators included in the Application Form. These indicators are used to monitor the Programme’s environmental performance and are linked to the specific objective selected by the project. Therefore, **Section 1.2 of the AF must be completed first** to determine the applicable indicators.

Applicants should select and quantify the relevant indicators, ensuring that the proposed targets are realistic, consistent with the planned project activities and duly explained.

6. Time plan

This section is automatically completed with the information provided in the workplan.

<u>**Additional notes**</u>

Project reporting and assessment exercises

To monitor project implementation, and as a condition for the ERDF reimbursement, a progress report must be submitted periodically to the Programme every project’s 6 months. The deadline for submission is 2 months after the end of the reporting period. More information on this subject available on the Programme’s Manual (section 5).

Legal and Ethical Considerations

- The project must ensure compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines in activities.
- Address data protection and privacy considerations.