

**Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme**

# **Application Manual**

**Version 2 (September 2015)**

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**Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme**

# **Application Manual**

Version 2 (September 2015)

**Part A: What is Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE**

# Part A

## What is Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE

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#### Part A

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# Part A

## What is Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE

### Table of abbreviations

<b>AF</b>	Application form
<b>BL</b>	Budget line
<b>eMS</b>	Electronic monitoring system
<b>ERDF</b>	European Regional Development Fund
<b>ETC</b>	European Territorial Cooperation
<b>LA</b>	Lead applicant
<b>LP</b>	Lead partner
<b>MA/JS</b>	Managing authority/joint secretariat
<b>MC</b>	Monitoring committee
<b>NCP</b>	National contact point
<b>PP</b>	Project partner
<b>SO</b>	Specific objective
<b>WP</b>	Work package

# I. Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme: An overview

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) objective, which supports regional cooperation among central European countries during the programming period 2014-2020.

Key variables of the programme were agreed by the participating Member States following thorough consultations with relevant partners and stakeholders. They are described in detail in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE cooperation programme document, which was adopted by the European Commission on 16 December 2014. It can be downloaded from [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

In the following sections a brief overview is provided on the programme area, the strategic programme orientation, the programme budget and its management structure. However, the main source of information on several key aspects to be considered when preparing a project proposal remains the cooperation programme document.

## II. Programme area

Compared to the 2007-2013 period, the programme area now covers also Croatia while western regions of Ukraine are not included any more.

Covering an area of over 1 million square kilometres the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is home to about 146 million people. The CENTRAL EUROPE programme area comprises the territory or parts of the territory of nine EU Member States.

In total, the programme area is made up of 76 statistical NUTS 2 regions. The participating countries and regions are listed in the following table.

Table 1 - Countries and regions participating in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme

Countries and regions	
Austria	Whole country
Croatia	Whole country
Czech Republic	Whole country
Germany	Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt,
Hungary	Whole country
Italy	Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Provincia Autonoma Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma Trento, Valle d'Aosta, and Veneto
Poland	Whole country
Slovak Republic	Whole country
Slovenia	Whole country

Central Europe is highly heterogeneous in geographical terms (marked by coastal areas, mountain ranges, rural areas, large urban agglomerations etc.) as well as in economic and social terms (exposing the lingering east-west divide). The programme area has a large number of assets but also faces numerous challenges in various fields affecting regional development, which have all been thoroughly analysed before concentrating the programme on four strategic priorities.

## Part A What is Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE

Results expected from the programme will directly contribute to reaching goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

An in depth analysis of the programme territory as well of its strengths and weaknesses is available in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE cooperation programme document (cf. sections 1.1.1.2 and 1.1.1.3), which can be downloaded from [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

Figure 1 - Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme area



### III. Strategic priorities and specific objectives

Projects to be funded will have to address one of the specific objectives of the programme as formulated under each priority axis.

In direct response to the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has formulated its overall programme objective as:

**”Cooperating beyond borders in central Europe to make our cities and regions better places to live and work.”**

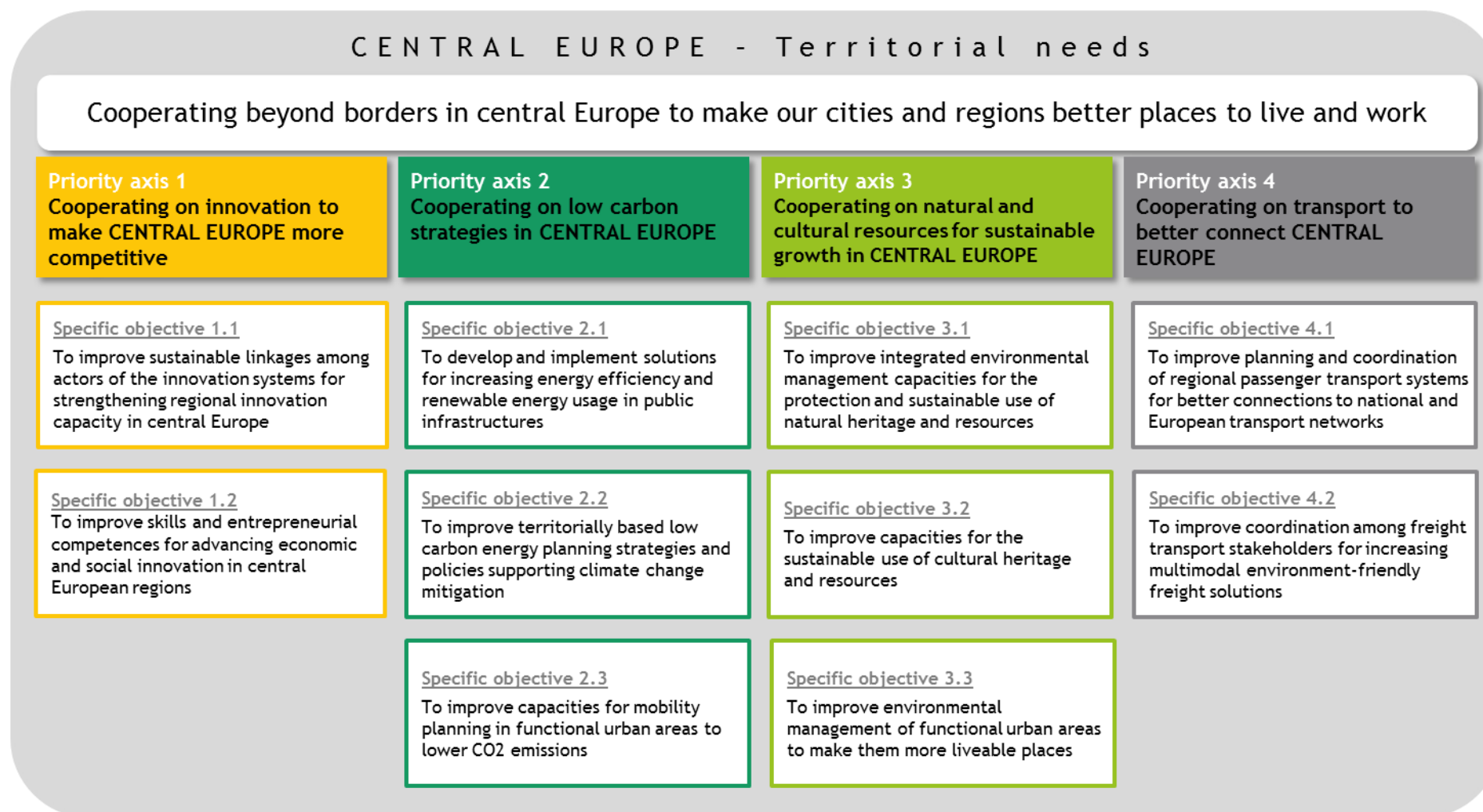
More precisely, transnational cooperation in central Europe is the catalyst for implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low-carbon economy, environment, culture and transport. It builds regional capacities following an integrated bottom-up approach involving and coordinating relevant actors from all governance levels.

In doing so, the programme will coordinate with other efforts in the regions including national and regional programmes supported by the European structural and investment funds (ESIF), macro-regional strategies, thematic EU programmes or the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The programme builds on four priorities of particular relevance to central Europe. These are further broken down to specific objectives and respond to the programme area’s challenges and needs or build on opportunities identified in the analysis included in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE cooperation programme document.



Figure 2 - Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme strategy, priority axes and specific objectives



More detailed information on the priority axes and specific objectives of the programme as well as examples of actions to be supported can be found in the cooperation programme document (section 2), available on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu) and in annex I of this application manual.

### **Priority axis 1 – “Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive”**

Under this priority axis, the programme addresses key socio-economic challenges and needs within central Europe in relation to smart growth as defined in the Europe 2020 strategy. The priority aims at more effective investment in research, innovation and education. It will help strengthening potentials of technology-oriented areas that are destinations of foreign investments and capital flows, notably through better linking actors of innovation systems. This will enhance the transfer of research and development (R&D) results and the set-up of cooperative initiatives and clusters. It will also address regional disparities in knowledge and education such as brain drain, and strengthen capacities and competences for entrepreneurship and social innovation, also responding to challenges related to demographic change. The two specific objectives of this priority axis are:

- SO 1.1 To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity in central Europe**
- SO 1.2 To improve skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions**

### **Priority axis 2 – “Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE”**

This priority axis aims at increasing the use of renewable energies and improving energy efficiency while exploiting the economic growth potential of the low-carbon sector. The programme will also contribute to enhancing knowledge and skills with regard to efficient energy management of public infrastructures. The development and implementation of territorially based low-carbon strategies and mobility in functional urban areas will be supported to tackle the challenges central Europe is facing in energy production and consumption. This will also contribute to mitigating climate change. The three specific objectives of this priority axis are:

- SO 2.1 To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures**
- SO 2.2 To improve territorially based low-carbon energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation**
- SO 2.3 To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO2 emissions**

### **Priority axis 3 – “Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE”**

This priority axis responds to the need for protecting and sustainably using natural and cultural heritage and resources, which are subject to increasing environmental and economic pressures as well as usage conflicts. Heritage and resources also constitute valuable assets of central European regions and represent important location factors benefitting regional development. Furthermore, the programme will focus on improving the quality of the environment in functional urban areas. To this aim, key challenges like land use conflicts, air, soil and water pollution or waste management will be addressed. Improvements will directly benefit the quality of life of urban residents. The three specific objectives of this priority axis are:

- SO 3.1 To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources**
- SO 3.2 To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources**
- SO 3.3 To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places**

**Priority axis 4 – “Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE”**

Under this priority axis, answers are provided to the core-periphery dichotomy in the programme area. The programme will do so by reducing the gap between peripheral and less accessible regions and the area’s well-connected centres. It will improve connections of regions and cities to the European transport networks and strengthen multi-modal environmentally friendly passenger and freight transport. The two specific objectives of this priority axis are:

- SO 4.1 To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks**
- SO 4.2 To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environmentally-friendly freight solutions**

In all specific objectives, specific actions focusing on policy-learning and implementation-oriented approaches at the transnational level will be supported. More concretely, these will include the development and implementation of strategies and action plans, the development, testing and implementation of tools, the preparation of larger investment, the implementation of pilot actions - including pilot investments - as well as capacity building measures including training.

## IV. Programme budget

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supplemented by match funding from projects (national counterpart). The ERDF contribution to the programme amounts to around EUR 246,6 million ERDF.

The overall programme budget including also the national counterpart amounts to around EUR 299 million.

The budget allocation according to priority axes is provided in the table below.

Table 2 - Funds per priority axis

	ERDF budget (EUR)	National (public and private) counterpart (EUR)	Total budget (EUR)	%
<b>Priority axis 1:</b> Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive	69.042.711	14.141.278	83.183.989	28%
<b>Priority axis 2:</b> Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE	44.384.600	9.090.822	53.475.422	18%
<b>Priority axis 3:</b> Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE	88.769.200	18.181.643	106.950.843	36%
<b>Priority axis 4:</b> Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE	29.589.733	6.060.548	35.650.281	12%
<b>Priority axis 5<sup>1</sup>:</b> Technical assistance	14.794.868	4.931.623	19.726.491	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>246.581.112</b>	<b>52.405.914</b>	<b>298.987.026</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Priority axis 5 (technical assistance) is devoted to the functioning and management of the programme. Funds under this priority axis are not available to projects.

The ERDF co-financing rate varies according to the Members States from which project partners are coming, as presented in the following table.

Table 3 - ERDF Co-financing rates

Member State	Maximum ERDF co-financing rate
Austria Germany Italy	80%
Croatia Czech Republic Hungary Poland Slovakia Slovenia	85%
Others <sup>2</sup>	80%

## V. Legal framework and programme related documents

The relevant documents listed below or web links to these (non-exhaustive list) are provided on the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE website [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

### Relevant programme documents

- ◆ Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme document (adopted by the European Commission on 16 December 2014)

### European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020: Key regulations

- ◆ Common provisions regulation (CPR)  
Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

<sup>2</sup> For further information on the participation of partners from other countries outside the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE cooperation area, please refer to Part B, chapter II.1.2 Partnership requirements and location of partners.

- ◆ ERDF Regulation  
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
- ◆ ETC Regulation  
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 goal
- ◆ EGTC Regulation  
Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings

### Strategic framework

- ◆ EUROPE 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, Communication from the Commission, COM(2010)2020 final
- ◆ Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020: Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions, Gödöllő, May 2011
- ◆ Sixth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion: Investment for jobs and growth. Promoting development and good governance in EU regions and cities, European Commission, July 2014

### Macro-regional strategies

- ◆ European Union Strategy for the Danube Region, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - COM(2010) 715 final
- ◆ European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2009) 248 final
- ◆ European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2014) 357 final
- ◆ European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, , COM(2015) 366 final
- ◆ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies, COM(2014) 284 final

### Other programme documents and relevant information

- ◆ CENTRAL EUROPE Programme: Results of the regional analysis (document analysis, online survey, interviews, SWOT), ÖIR/ IGSO PAS, September 2012

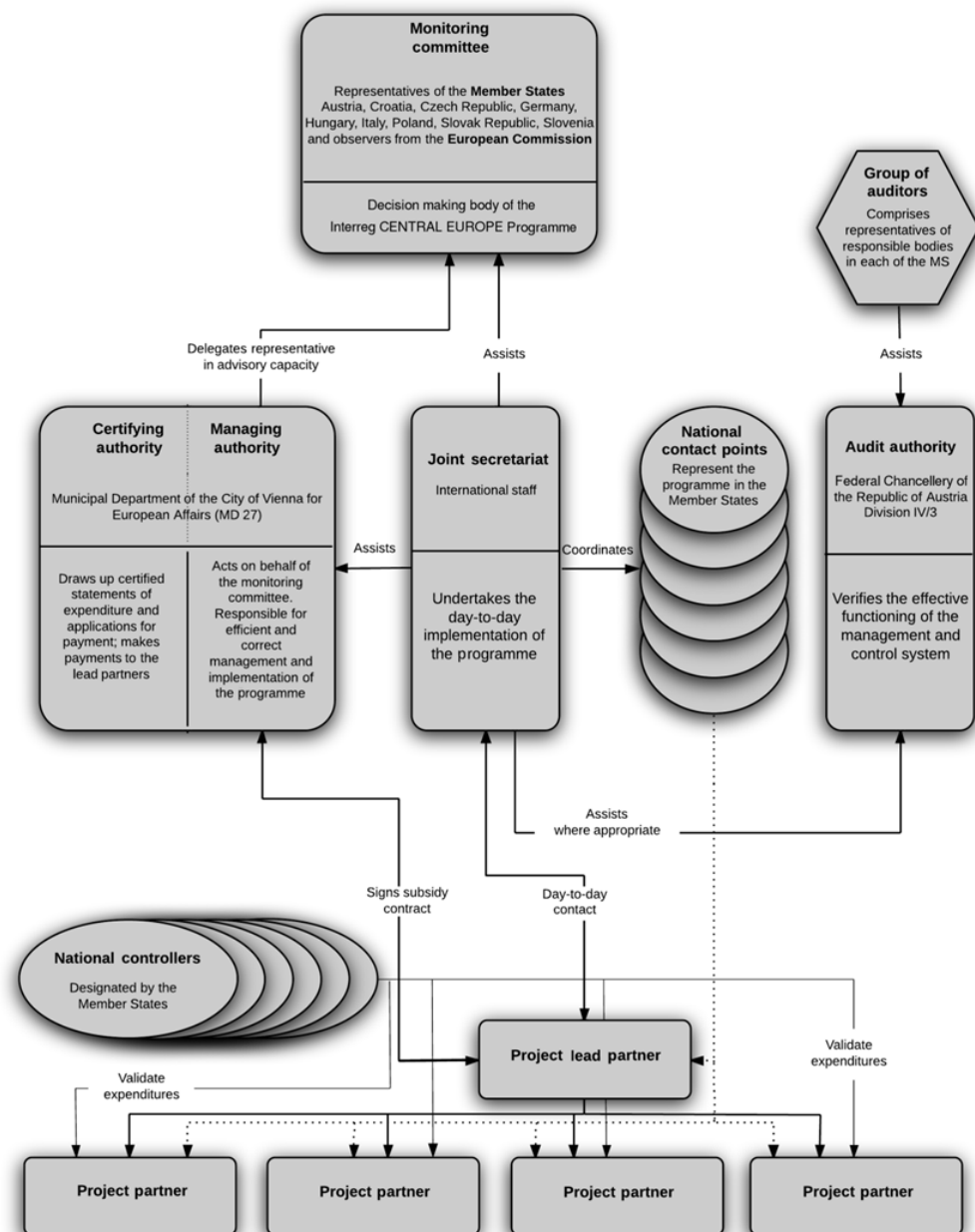
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- ◆ Thematic studies analysing results of CENTRAL EUROPE projects 2007-2013
  - ⇒ Thematic study: Technology transfer and business innovation in the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, INOVA, July 2013
  - ⇒ Thematic study: Sustainable public transport and logistics in the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, komobile, April 2013
  - ⇒ Thematic study: Environmental risk management and climate change, REC Hungary, June 2014
  - ⇒ Thematic study: Energy efficiency and renewable energies, greenovate! Europe, April 2014
  - ⇒ Thematic study: Cultural heritage and creative resources in the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, ERICarts, March 2014
  - ⇒ Thematic study: Demographic change and knowledge development in the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, Bureau PAU, May 2014
  - ⇒ CENTRAL EUROPE Portraits (Innovation, transport, environment, energy, demographic change, cultural heritage), June 2014
  - ⇒ CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013 output library, available at  
<http://www.central2013.eu/documents-2007-2013/output-library>
  - ⇒ CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013 approved projects, available at  
<http://www.central2013.eu/nc/projects-2007-2013/approved-projects/>

## VI. Management structure

The Member States participating in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme have established a shared management system to manage, coordinate and supervise the implementation of the programme (as illustrated in figure 3).

Figure 3 - Programme management structure





### **Monitoring committee**

The monitoring committee steers the programme and ensures the quality and effectiveness of its implementation and approves projects for funding. It is composed of representatives of the Member States of the programme. The list of the monitoring committee members is available on the programme website.

### **Managing authority (with additional functions of certifying authority)**

The managing authority is responsible for the management and implementation of the programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and in line with EU regulations ruling the ERDF funds. The managing authority will also carry out the functions of the certifying authority, i.e. certifying statement of expenditure and applications for payment before they are sent to the Commission. It is also responsible for ERDF payments to project lead partners.

### **Audit authority and group of auditors**

The main task of the audit authority is to ensure that audits are carried out on the management and control systems of appropriate sample of projects and on the annual accounts according to internationally accepted audit standards in order to verify the expenditures declared. Audits on projects will be spread during the entire programme lifetime. In line with Article 25(2) of the ETC regulation, the audit authority will be assisted by a group of auditors comprising of representatives of responsible bodies of each Member State participating in the programme.

### **Joint secretariat**

The joint secretariat assists the managing authority and the monitoring committee in carrying out their respective functions and undertakes the day-to-day implementation of the programme. It also provides guidance to project applicants and partners.

### **Network of national contact points**

Member States participating in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme have established national contact points representing the programme on national, regional and local level. In cooperation with the joint secretariat, the network of contact points provides information to potential applicants, advises and assists project partners, informs stakeholders on achievements of the programme and supports the national and transnational programme management. Contact details of the national contact points are provided at [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

### **National controllers**

In line with Article 125(4) and 125(5) of the CPR as well as Article 23(4) of the ETC Regulation, each Member State has set up a control system making it possible to verify the delivery of the products and services co-financed, the soundness of the expenditure declared and the compliance of such expenditure with EU rules, programme rules and national rules.

For this purpose, each Member State has designated controllers that are responsible for verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared by each lead and project partner participating in a project located on its territory. For detailed information on the control requirements in your country, please visit [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

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**Part B: What projects we are looking for**

# Part B

## What projects we are looking for

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# I. Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE key principles

## I.1. Result-orientation

The result-oriented approach which was already successfully applied in the 2007-2013 period will be continued and further strengthened by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. This is reflected in the new programme and project intervention logic.

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme fosters changes within the wider programme area, going beyond the regions involved in a project.

### Programme intervention logic

The European Union requires programmes of the 2014-2020 funding period to set in place a **result-oriented** intervention logic demonstrating their clear contribution to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Programmes are to fund projects which demonstrate the translation of outputs arising from “soft” actions (surveys, studies, etc.) into concrete, visible and sustainable results. Those have to lead to a change (improvement) of the initial situation.

The intervention logic of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme consists of four priority axes which are broken down into 10 programme specific objectives. For each **specific objective** main **expected results** are defined, which reflect changes that the programme seeks to achieve for the entire programme area through the implementation of projects. Results and related changes are measured through result indicators linked to each programme specific objective.

**Outputs** are the direct products of supported projects (measured by output indicators), which in turn contribute to results (see part D of this manual: chapters IV.2.3.2 on project focus and IV.2.4.2 on work package description as well as annex III).

An outline of the priority axes and the programme specific objectives is provided in part A, chapter III on strategic priorities and programme specific objectives as well as in annex I.

A visualisation of the full programme intervention logic including examples of actions and the linked result and output indicators as well as target groups per priority axis is provided as annex II of this manual.

### Project intervention logic

Projects have to strictly apply a result-oriented approach, clearly defining the results (i.e. changes) the project is striving for and linking them with the territorial challenges and needs (see also part C, chapter III on developing the project intervention logic and part D, chapter IV.2.3.2 on project focus).

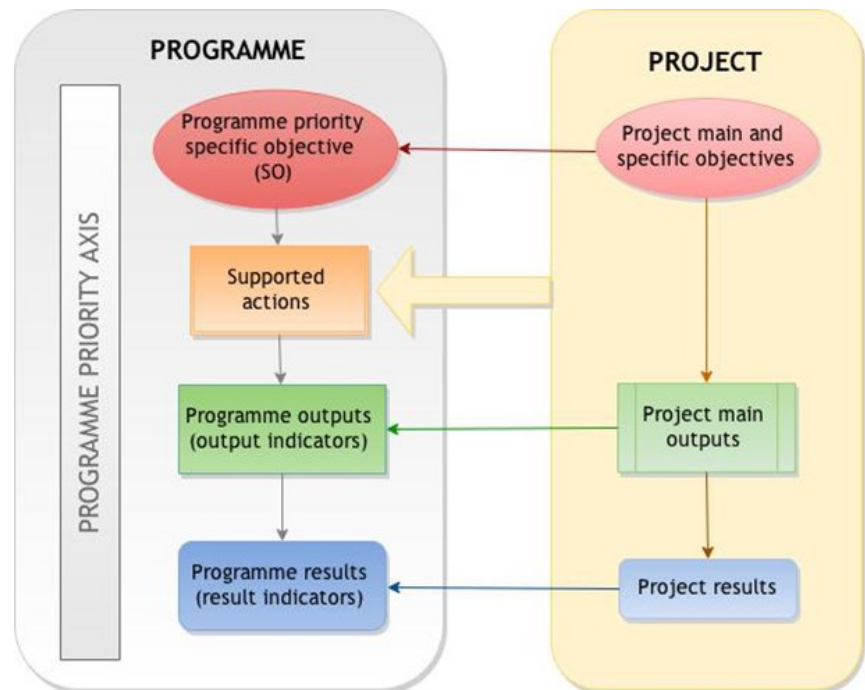
The coherence of the project intervention logic (i.e. the project specific objectives, activities, outputs and expected results) with the targeted specific objective of the programme is a pre-condition for a project to be funded (see also the links between the programme and project intervention logic as presented in figure 1 below).

Projects not showing a clear link to a programme specific objective and/or not contributing to the respective expected programme result will not be supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

<sup>1</sup> Including information on “Investment priorities” chosen by the programme from the list defined at EU level. For more information please refer to section 2 of the “Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme”.

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Figure 1- Links between the programme and project intervention logic



Projects require a clear result-oriented approach contributing the attainment of a specific objective of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme:

- ◆ Project objectives have to clearly target one single programme specific objective within the chosen priority axis.
- ◆ The contribution of the project to the respective programme result (and the related result indicator) has to be clearly demonstrated.
- ◆ Project activities and outputs have to be logically linked to the targeted specific objective.

## I.2. Transnational and territorial relevance

Transnational and territorial relevance is one of the key quality requirements for a project to be funded. Each project has to clearly contribute to the chosen programme specific objective, addressing development needs and territorial challenges that are shared across the regions participating in the project. This means:

- ◆ The problems identified cannot be solved efficiently by individual regions or countries acting alone. This could be either:
  - ⇒ An issue affecting a clearly defined transnational geographical area across national and regional borders (e.g., river basins, transport corridors etc.), or
  - ⇒ A common issue of interest for which transnational cooperation leads to more innovative and efficient solutions.

## Part B

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The transnational co-operation character and territorial relevance has to be clearly demonstrated throughout the entire project (including the project approach and work plan).

- ◆ Solutions are jointly developed by organisations in different Member States working together in a project, thereby showing a clear transnational added value going beyond the mere addition of results independently achievable in the involved regions.
- ◆ Projects have to demonstrate an integrated approach to regional development by combining thematic and territorial dimensions.
- ◆ Project outputs should be embedded in a transnational working approach.
- ◆ All partners have to actively participate in the project according to their functions and competences, in order to achieve the collective project results.

Projects are not considered transnational if they just consist of a series of local actions which are linked only through a vague thematic relationship and/or an ex-post exchange of experience among partners without any joint implementation.

Projects that do not address an issue of transnational relevance or covering only issues fundable by regional/national or cross-border programmes will not be supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. Additionally, project proposals fundable under other European Structural and Investment Funds or other Union instruments (e.g. Horizon 2020, COSME, LIFE, Connecting Europe Facility) will not be supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

### 1.3. Partnership relevance

Partners with relevant competences (thematic expertise, territorial relevance, institutional capacity etc.) for reaching project objectives and results should be included in the partnership.

In order to achieve tangible project results it is essential to involve partners who are most relevant and competent for the development, implementation, communication as well as capitalisation of the planned outputs and results. In this respect, for designing a relevant partnership the thematic competence and expertise, geographical and institutional relevance have to be considered. Depending on the goals of the project this can imply the involvement of different governance levels (national, regional and local authorities) as well as other players such as research institutions, intermediate bodies, agencies, enterprises and many others.

The partnership should reflect the integrated territorial approach to regional development to be set in place by the project, which requires multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships.

All partners have to be involved in a way that demonstrates the joint implementation and transnational added value of the project.

The sustainability of project outputs and results (financial, institutional and political) has to be ensured. Sustainability has to be considered already when designing the project and to be integrated in the work plan (e.g. involvement of decision makers, preparation of political decisions, financing models etc.)

Projects supported with in all programme priority axes need to demonstrate that they adopt an innovative approach to tackle the territorial challenges of central Europe.

## I.4. Sustainability

Sustainability of project outputs and results is crucial for ensuring territorial impact and long-term benefits which continue after the project end in order to reach the project's overall objectives.

Therefore projects have to ensure that outputs obtained and results achieved are durable and suitable to be continued after project closure. This may include follow-up activities, uptake to the policy level, ownership, financing through other initiatives or funds, leverage of investments, etc.

In order to achieve sustainability, projects need to adopt from the beginning a longer-term, strategic perspective that leads to desired results for the target groups over an extended time frame. In order to achieve such long-term benefits, it is essential to consider needs of key stakeholders as well as the institutional context already when designing the project. In particular, key stakeholders should be actively involved from the early stages of the project development.

A distinction between the following three dimensions of sustainability should be made:

- ◆ Financial sustainability (financing of follow-up activities and investments, leverage of funds, resources for covering future operating and maintenance costs, etc.)
- ◆ Institutional sustainability ("ownership" of project outputs - which structures will allow the results of the project to continue to be in place after the project end? And how?)
- ◆ Political sustainability (what structural impact will the project have? - e.g. will it lead to improved policies, legislation, plans, codes of conduct, methods, etc.?)

## I.5. Innovation

Innovation is considered as one of the most important driving forces for regional development and economic wealth. It can be described as a process through which knowledge is created and translated into new products, services or processes of the private and the public sector. Innovation is conceived in a variety of contexts, such as technology, economy, social systems, policy development etc. and can be process-oriented, goal-oriented or context-oriented.

Innovative approaches may result from e.g. the testing and demonstration of novel solutions within different (regional) contexts, experimental piloting of new methods or tools with a view to their future mainstreaming and/or their policy integration as well as from capitalising on previously acquired knowledge etc. An important aspect in this regards is the involvement of relevant actors in the partnership and during project implementation in order to ensure availability of the relevant knowledge and expertise.

All projects supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme have to apply new or innovative approaches going beyond the state of art in the concerned regions and which also can be transferred beyond the partnership.

In addition, the programme supports projects that specifically address the topic of innovation in the framework of regional innovation systems (priority axis 1), thus enhancing the transfer of research and development (R&D) results and improving skills and entrepreneurial competences for economic and social innovation (see part A, chapter III and annex 1 on the description of priority axes and programme specific objectives).

The programme will not support basic research projects or purely academic networking.



## I.6. Horizontal principles

A horizontal principle is a principle that must be integrated throughout the programme and in all projects.

Therefore every project approved by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is required to contribute to the following horizontal principles.

### Environment protection and sustainable development

Sustainable development and environment protection are integrated as horizontal principles in the cooperation programme. Therefore all projects supported by the programme will have to respect the relevant policies and rules.

Project applicants have to describe the contribution to sustainable development, explaining how the sustainability principle is anchored within the project design and planned activities.

Further, applicants have to specify which possible environmental effects (positive, neutral or negative) the project will likely have considering the following aspects: water, soil, air and climate, population and human health, fauna, flora and biodiversity, cultural heritage and landscape. This is of particular relevance in case of pilot investments.

Projects submitted under any priority axis are strongly encouraged to incorporate activities for tackling environmental concerns and reducing their environmental and carbon footprint, for example by:

- ◆ Including environmental criteria in procurement procedures
- ◆ Giving preference to environmentally-friendly mobility options (in particular for short travel distances)
- ◆ Considering online meetings instead of face-to-face meetings where possible
- ◆ Organising conferences and events in a sustainable way (e.g. by combining different meetings in one place, reducing printing and using recyclable materials, using video conference facilities, etc.)
- ◆ Considering resource efficiency and the use of renewable energy at all levels
- ◆ Making use of regional supply chains (reducing supply chain length and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions)

### Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Projects have to ensure that the activities implemented are in line with the principle of equal opportunities and do not generate discrimination of any kind (sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation).

Applicants have to describe the contribution to equal opportunities and non-discrimination, explaining how the equal opportunity principle is anchored within the project design and planned activities.

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Besides actions of projects which explicitly address the reduction of disparities, all projects submitted under any priority axis are encouraged to incorporate measures for promoting equal opportunities and preventing any discrimination, for example by actively tackling concerns of demographic change and inequality. Projects are also encouraged to integrate the principle of barrier-free accessibility at all levels, with a special focus on physical investments.

**Equality between men and women**

Projects have to ensure that the activities implemented are in line with the principle of equality between men and women and do not generate discrimination of any kind.

Applicants have to describe the contribution to this principle, explaining how the equality principle is anchored in the project design and planned activities.

Projects submitted under any priority axis are encouraged to incorporate measures for integrating the gender perspective, for example by integrating equal participation of women and men and/or actively promoting gender mainstreaming.

## II. Basic project requirements

### II.1. Partnership

#### II.1.1. Definition of partners

Partners participating in projects and receiving funding from the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme shall be the following:

- A. National, regional and local public bodies (including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013);
- B. Private institutions, including private companies, having legal personality;
- C. International organisations acting under the national law of any CENTRAL EUROPE Member State or, with restrictions, under international law (see below for details).

In the framework of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, the so-called “public equivalent bodies”, i.e. bodies governed by public law as defined in Article 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement are eligible partners under category A. “national, regional and local public bodies”. Please note that such bodies have to fulfil all the following characteristics in order to be considered as eligible partners:

1. They are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
2. They have legal personality; and
3. They are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

Partners should bear in mind that the absence of advance payments and the time gap between incurring the expenditure and having it reimbursed may lead to cash-flow problems. This might be particularly relevant for private institutions.

Private institutions acting as lead partners must comply with minimum criteria of financial capacity, as described in part D, chapter V.2.b.

#### ATTENTION

*Please note that bodies whose main scope of activities within their business profile, as well as their project role, consists of project coordination, management, communication, knowledge management or other activities that are of a mere executive or supporting character (service providers) cannot be involved as project partners. Compliance with this requirement will be checked during the quality assessment of project proposals which, on a case by case basis, could lead even to the exclusion of such partners.*

## Part B

### What projects we are looking for

International organisations acting under international law can participate in projects only upon their explicit acceptance of all requirements deriving from the Treaty<sup>2</sup> and the regulations applicable in the framework of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, including - but not limited to - the following:

- ◆ Adherence to applicable community policies, including the respect of rules on public procurement;
- ◆ Acceptance of the national control requirements set in the framework of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme by the Member State in which the organisation acting as partner is located;
- ◆ Acceptance of controls and audits by all those bodies entitled to carry out such controls in the framework of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, including the managing authority and joint secretariat, the audit authority and the European Court of Auditors as well as the relevant national authorities of the Member State in which the international organisation acting as project partner is located. Storage of all documents required for these controls must allow performing them in the geographical area covered by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme;
- ◆ Final financial liability for all sums wrongly paid out.

A project proposal involving international organisations acting under international law in the partnership must include an ad-hoc declaration to be signed by these institutions (step 2 of the call). For reasons of legal security additional legal information or the signature of direct bilateral agreements between the MA and these institutions may be requested prior to granting the funds.

## II.1.2. Partnership requirements and location of partners

### Size of the partnership

As a minimum requirement the partnership must involve:

- ◆ at least three financing partners
- ◆ from at least three countries and
- ◆ with at least two of the partners located in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE regions.

The size of the partnership should reflect the scope of the project and remain manageable. Therefore, the recommended maximum size of a partnership should not exceed 12 partners. Larger partnerships are possible but need to be duly justified according to the specific project scope.

### Geographical location of partners

As a basic principle, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme supports cooperation between project partners located in the programme area.

Partners outside the programme area can exceptionally participate if any of the conditions below apply:

#### Assimilated partners:

German and/or Italian national public authorities/bodies located outside the programme area which:

- ◆ are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the eligible area (e.g. ministries);
- ◆ carry out activities which are for the benefit of the regions in the programme area.

<sup>2</sup> Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), available on <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT>.

## Part B What projects we are looking for

EU partners outside the CENTRAL EUROPE programme area<sup>3</sup> (20 % geographical flexibility rule):

Organisations located outside the programme area but inside the European Union can become project partners (co-financed by the ERDF) only in exceptional and duly justified cases. This means that their participation needs to bring clear added value and expertise to the implementation of a project and has to be of benefit for the CENTRAL EUROPE programme area. The ERDF allocated to a single project for such partners together with the ERDF spent outside the programme area (as provided for in chapter II.2) **cannot exceed 20 % of the total ERDF contribution to this project.**

Institutions located in EU regions outside the programme area can only act as project partners. Lead partners must compulsorily be located in the programme area or meet the requirements of “assimilated partners” as mentioned above. Participation of EU-partners in project proposals is open to all EU regions, under all four priority axes and irrespective of the legal status of the partners. Nevertheless, should the activities to be carried out by partners located in EU regions outside the programme area be considered as **state aid relevant**, the participation of these partners will finally not be allowed due to the impossibility for the programme monitoring committee to validate the result of the state aid assessment on behalf of a Member State not participating in the programme.

Furthermore, the correctness of the legal status declared by institutions located in EU regions outside the programme area when submitting the proposal is to be confirmed by competent national authorities of the respective Member States outside the programme area. It is a duty of the applicants located in EU regions outside the programme area to obtain the legal status confirmation by their competent national authorities, however the MA/JS will support the process to the possible extent.

### ATTENTION

*In the case that this confirmation is not obtained within the timeframe set in part D, chapter V.2, the concerned applicant will be excluded from the project and the lead partner must initiate a partnership modification procedure as described in chapter D.3 of the implementation manual. For further information on the procedure please refer to part D, chapter V.2.*

Please also note that, in case of project approval, the effective participation of partners from EU regions outside the programme area is subject to the condition that the Member States where they are located sign an agreement with the managing authority on the acceptance of all management, control and audit responsibilities as well as of liabilities in case of irregularities. The agreement shall be accompanied by a description of the national control system for the verification of expenditure incurred and paid by beneficiaries located in such Member States. The MA/JS will contact the relevant national authorities immediately after the MC decision for funding of projects which involve partners located in EU regions outside the programme area.

### ATTENTION

*If the responsible national institution of the Member State outside the cooperation area does not provide the signed agreement and the respective description of the national control system within 12 months from the date of the relevant MC decision for funding, the PP organisation concerned shall be excluded from the project. In this case, the lead partner must initiate a partnership modification procedure as described in chapter D.3 of the implementation manual.*

<sup>3</sup> For provisions on the implementation of project activities in regions outside the programme area, please refer to chapter II.2.

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of partners located in regions of Germany and Italy outside the programme area, since the relevant national authorities already accepted the necessary conditions for programme implementation, management and control.

#### **Third country partners:**

Third country partners: Participation in projects is open to institutions coming from any third country. However, partners from non-EU countries will not receive ERDF funding from the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme but could act as associated partners.

### **II.1.3. Lead partner principle and requirements**

The “lead partner principle” applies to the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, in compliance with Article 13 of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013. This means that each partnership appoints one organisation to act as lead partner. The lead partner takes full financial and legal responsibility for the implementation of the entire project.

Lead partner organisations can be public bodies, private institutions or international organisations acting under national law. On the contrary, international organisations acting under international law are only eligible as partners and they cannot act as lead partners. The lead partner must be located in the programme area or meet the requirements of “assimilated partners” (see previous chapter II.1.2).

After approval of a project by the monitoring committee, the lead partner will sign a subsidy contract with the managing authority (City of Vienna, Austria) and kick-off the project implementation. During the implementation phase, the main task of the lead partner is the coordination of the project with sound financial and project management. In addition, the lead partner should maintain a good communication flow among the partnership and ensure an efficient exchange of information that enables the successful delivery of the project outputs. The lead partner is also responsible for communication with the programme bodies, especially the managing authority and the joint secretariat.

The responsibilities of the lead partner are defined in the subsidy contract. The lead partner has to lay down the arrangements with all other partners in a written agreement (partnership agreement). The models of subsidy contract and partnership agreement are available on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

#### **ATTENTION**

*Private lead applicants have to comply with obligatory financial capacity requirements detailed in part D, chapter V.2 of the application manual. Since these requirements will be checked by the programme only within step 2 of the call and since the lead applicant cannot change between step 1 and step 2 of the call, proposal submitted by private lead applicants not meeting the necessary financial capacity criteria will be rejected in step 2 even if selected within step 1 of the call. Private lead applicants should therefore carefully check their ability to fulfil the applicable financial capacity criteria before submitting their application in step 1 of the call.*

Before signing the subsidy contract private lead partners will be asked to provide proof that a valid financial guarantee, issued by a primary financial institution (bank, insurance), is in force (see part D chapter V.5).

### **II.1.4. Associated partners**

Institutions willing to be involved in the project without financially contributing to it are to be considered as associated partners. Such associated partners do not account for the fulfilment of minimum the partnership requirements and they may come also from third countries.

Expenditure incurred by these bodies might be borne by any of the financing project partners in compliance with the applicable eligibility rules.

In any case, the involvement of associated institutions must not conflict with public procurement rules. Therefore, expenditure incurred by these bodies should in principle be limited to reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs related to their participation in the project meetings.

## **II. 2. Location of activities**

In line with the requirements for the geographical location of partners, and as a basic principle, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme supports project activities taking place in the programme area.

This principle applies both to lead partners and partners located in the programme area as well as German and Italian “assimilated partners” (as defined in chapter II.1.2). For the latter, core thematic activities must be implemented in the regions of the programme area, with the exception of the necessary management activities.

All other activities implemented by the lead partners and partners of the CENTRAL EUROPE programme area in EU regions outside the programme area or in third countries - including the participation in missions, study visits and events - can be accepted only in exceptional and duly justified cases. The following requirements must be respected:

- ◆ They are for the benefit of the regions of the programme area;
- ◆ They are essential for the implementation of the project;
- ◆ They are explicitly foreseen in the application form or, if not, have been previously authorised by the MA/JS.

Costs related to such activities must be incurred by a lead partner, a partner located in the programme area or an assimilated partner. Please note that provisions in this chapter do not have to be confused with those concerning institutions located in EU regions outside the programme area participating in projects under the geographical flexibility rule for partnerships. For these specific provisions are defined in chapter II.1.2.

## **II.3. Types of activities supported by the programme**

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme supports project activities which put emphasis on policy support and/or practical implementation of explorative and/or pilot activities. Within a single project both types of activities (policy support and practical implementation) can be combined. However, projects can also set a specific focus (i.e. pure policy support or implementation projects).

In any case, projects should also foresee capitalisation and communication activities (i.e. making the results available and transfer them to a wider audience) in order to roll-out and mainstream the achieved results.

The types of activities are linked with the typology of outputs as applied by the programme which is further described in part D, chapter IV.2.4.2 and annex III (including examples of outputs per priority axis and programme specific objective).

## Part B What projects we are looking for

### Policy support related activities

Activities related to policy support should consider the development, effectiveness and coherence of policies of a certain thematic sector in the countries and regions concerned by the project. This should activate a mutual learning process among the project partners, with the aim to create new policies and/or improve existing ones leading to their concrete adoption or implementation. Respective activities could include analytical and research tasks as well as **strategy and action plan development** in the relevant thematic fields.

#### EXAMPLE

*Project activities could consolidate knowledge and experience of various cities leading to the preparation and implementation of climate change mitigation plans for urban areas. This could result in cooperation agreements of concerned authorities and other stakeholders.*

### Implementation-oriented activities

Implementation-oriented activities should focus on the practical implementation of knowledge and jointly (transnationally) developed **novel approaches/tools** in a certain thematic sector. They can be physical or technical objects, but also methods, concepts or services, e.g. analytical tools, management tools, technical tools, software tools, monitoring tools, decision support tools etc. To be effective, tools have to be tailored to user needs and the respective framework conditions.

The development of tools can be followed by their practical implementation through **pilot actions**. A pilot action should have the following characteristics:

- ◆ Experimental or demonstration character, i.e. testing, evaluating and/or demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of a scheme (e.g. services, tools, methods or approaches). Therefore it covers either the testing of innovative solutions or demonstrating the application of existing solutions to a certain territory/sector.
- ◆ Limited in its scope (area, duration, scale etc.) being unprecedented in a comparable environment.
- ◆ Results and practices of pilot actions should be jointly exploited and transferred to other institutions and territories.

#### EXAMPLE

*Project activities could address the development of business support tools for SMEs which are subsequently applied and tested in various business sectors.*

Pilot actions can include **pilot investments** that represent small-scale interventions which contribute to the successful implementation of a pilot action thereby demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of a scheme (e.g. services, tools, methods or approaches) or investment.

A pilot investment must have a demonstrating/model or pilot character and show a clear transnational effect being jointly strived for and evaluated by the partnership. Such successful demonstration is supposed to pave the way for subsequent large-scale investments within the regions participating in the project and beyond.

Pilot investments can cover infrastructure and works (e.g. setting up ex-novo of a building or adapting existing infrastructure) as well as thematic equipment linked to the project activities (e.g. air quality monitoring equipment) - see chapter II.7.3 on budget line specifications.

In addition to the characteristics applicable to pilot actions (as stated above), pilot investments have to comply with the following requirements:



## Part B

### What projects we are looking for

- ◆ Clear transnational effect and added value;
- ◆ Clear contribution to project objectives and expected results;
- ◆ Clear benefit for target groups;
- ◆ Mutual learning of the whole partnership and transfer of experience to other stakeholders and regions, the transnational transfer of results should form part of the project;
- ◆ Durability of investment (e.g. maintenance, financing) to be ensured after project end in line with provisions of chapter E.2 of the programme implementation manual;
- ◆ Ownership of investment, to be retained with the responsible partner<sup>5</sup>. If an investment consists of unmovable items, also the related investment site needs to be owned by and remain in the ownership of the respective partner;
- ◆ Where applicable, it should be demonstrated that necessary authorisations by competent national/regional/local authorities (building permission) are already available or can be timely obtained therefore not hampering the realisation of the investment and therefore the overall project implementation;
- ◆ Compliance with environmental policies and legislation (see chapter I.6 on horizontal principles).

#### EXAMPLE

*A pilot investment could consist of small-scale renovations of public buildings in order to demonstrate the technical and economic feasibility of novel energy saving technologies and approaches.*

Projects can include **training activities** (e.g. training seminars, study visits, peer reviews, online training courses etc.) as a supporting measure for improving the understanding, knowledge, skills, competences and access to information of targeted stakeholders. Trainings should be jointly developed at transnational level and tailored according to the needs of the specific territories and target groups.

### Capitalisation activities

Projects should include activities to capitalise on the achieved results aiming at their roll out into broader policies, strategies, action plans, thereby contributing also to the preparation of large scale investments and/or leverage of funds. Capitalisation activities should also focus on the widening up of the audience/target groups of existing project results and/or the raising of ownership and awareness of relevant stakeholders.

<sup>5</sup> In line with provisions of Article 71 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013.

## II. 4. Project size and funding

It is recommended that projects should have a **total budget ranging from 1 to 5 million EUR**. In exceptional cases, smaller or larger projects can be supported.

In any case, partners should ensure that the financial size of the project truly reflects the activities foreseen in the work plan and that it is based on the principles of sound financial management.

## II.5. Duration

The recommended project duration is **30 to 36 months**. However, if justified by the project scope and the planned activities a longer implementation period up to maximum 48 months could be acceptable.

## II.6. Co-financing

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). According to the location of lead partners and project partners the following ERDF co-financing rates apply:

Table 4 - Co-financing rates

Member State	Maximum ERDF co-financing rate
Austria Germany Italy	80%
Croatia Czech Republic Hungary Poland Slovakia Slovenia	85%
Outside Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme area but inside the EU	80%
Outside the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No ERDF co-financing</li> <li>• Participation with own funds</li> </ul>

ERDF contribution to project lead partners and partners might be reduced following the application of state aid rules. For further information in this regard please see chapter II.7.7.

The share of expenditure not covered by ERDF shall be guaranteed by each project lead partner and partner by means of national co-financing, which can be provided as follows:

- A. **Public co-financing** - public funding at national, regional or local level, obtained via specific co-financing schemes set up by the Member States or provided directly with own funds by the partners having a public status. Co-financing of international organisations also falls under this category.
- B. **Private co-financing** - the amount of own funds provided as match funding by private institutions.

The contribution of each lead partner and project partner, be it a public or private institution, must be confirmed by the lead partner or partner declaration (the latter has to be provided in step 2 of the application procedure).

## II.7. Financial requirements

This chapter gives a brief outline of the main financial requirements applicants have to consider when developing their project proposals. Further information on financial matters is enclosed in the programme implementation manual available for download on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu). **Applicants invited to prepare full applications within step 2 of the call are strongly advised to consult this document.**

Further guidance on how to develop a sound project budget can be found in part C, chapter VII, of this manual.

### II.7.1. Hierarchy of rules on eligibility

Three levels of rules apply to the eligibility of expenditure in the framework of all Interreg programmes, including Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE :

1. **EU rules:** Due to the fact that the programme is co-financed from the ERDF, all general rules concerning eligibility of expenditure regarding the structural funds are applicable. This includes:
  - ◆ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (Financial regulation) providing the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union;
  - ◆ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (Common provisions regulation) where Articles 6 and 65 to 71 give specific provisions on applicable law as well as on eligibility of expenditure;
  - ◆ Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 (ERDF regulation) where article 3 gives specific provisions on the eligibility of activities under the ERDF;
  - ◆ Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (ETC regulation) where Articles 18 to 20 give specific provisions on eligibility of expenditure applicable to programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation goal;
  - ◆ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 481/2014 containing specific rules on eligibility of expenditure for cooperation programmes.

Please note that, in line with Article 6 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, all applicable EU and national rules, apart from eligibility rules, are on a higher hierarchical level than the rules set by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme and they must be obeyed (e.g. public procurement law).

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2. **Programme rules:** namely additional rules on eligibility of expenditure for the co operation programme as a whole, as outlined in the programme implementation manual (available for download on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu))
3. **National (including institutional) eligibility rules:** which apply for matters not covered by eligibility rules laid down in the abovementioned EU and programme rules.

As provided under chapter 7 of the Financial Regulation (Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012) the principle of sound financial management builds on the following three principles:

The principle of economy requires that the resources used by the beneficiary in the pursuit of its activities shall be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality and at the best price;

The principle of efficiency concerns the best relationship between resources employed and results achieved;

The principle of effectiveness concerns the attainment of the specific objectives set and the achievement of the intended results.

### II.7.2. General eligibility requirements

As a general principle, expenditure is eligible for funding when fulfilling **all** of the following **general eligibility requirements**:

- ◆ It relates to the costs of implementing a project as submitted by the lead applicant and approved by the monitoring committee;
- ◆ It relates to items that did not receive support from other EU Funds or other contributions from third parties<sup>6</sup>;
- ◆ It is essential for the achievement of the project objectives/outputs and it would not be incurred if the project is not carried out;
- ◆ It complies with the principle of real costs except for costs calculated as flat rates and lump sums;
- ◆ It complies with the principle of sound financial management (see tip box);
- ◆ It has been incurred and paid by a beneficiary for actions as defined in the latest approved application form in the period between the project start and end date set in the subsidy contract<sup>7</sup>;
- ◆ It is registered in the beneficiary's accounts through a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code set in place specifically for the project;
- ◆ It is not in contradiction with any specific eligibility criterion applicable to the respective budget line (as described in the following chapter II.7.3 and as further detailed in chapter C.2 of the implementation manual);
- ◆ When applicable, the relevant public procurement rules have been observed;
- ◆ It has been validated by an authorised national controller<sup>8</sup>.

#### ATTENTION

*Please note that costs which are not eligible according to the applicable eligibility rules cannot be claimed, even if included in the approved application form.*

<sup>6</sup> With the exception of financial contributions from third parties to the expenditure not exceeding the share of beneficiary's contribution to that expenditure (as further explained in chapter C.1.2 of the implementation manual).

<sup>7</sup> Without prejudice to the eligibility of preparation and contracting costs - reimbursed as a lump sum (as provided for in chapter II.7.4 and as further specified in chapter A.1.4 of the implementation manual) - as well as project closure costs related to final reports and audit certificates as provided for in chapter C.1.4 of the implementation manual.

<sup>8</sup> National controller is the body or person verifying at national level that the co-financed products and services have been delivered, that the related expenditure has been paid and that it complies with the applicable EU, programme and national/internal rules. For more information on the national controllers in your country please refer to the "country-specific information" section on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu). as well as to chapter A.4.1 of the implementation manual.

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**Time-wise**, expenditure is eligible according to the following three periods:

- A. Costs for the **preparation and contracting** of an approved project can be compensated through a lump sum under the terms and conditions further explained in chapter II.7.4 as well as chapter A.1.4 of the implementation manual. The lump sum will be paid out upon condition that the partnership successfully fulfilled all conditions for approval of the project set by the MC, all necessary information is included in the section "Supplementary information" in eMS and the subsidy contract is signed. The date of the MA/JS acceptance of the revised application form fulfilling all conditions for approval is also the date by which preparation and contracting activities end. Costs for these are covered by the lump sum. In case a project starts its implementation phase earlier than such date, real costs linked to preparation and contracting (e.g. staff, travel and accommodation) cannot be charged under the implementation costs.
- B. Costs for the **implementation** of an approved project are eligible from its start date until its end date as set in the subsidy contract. At the earliest, costs are eligible as from the day after the submission of the full application form, provided that this day is the official start date of the project as indicated in the application form. On this basis, partners may decide at their own risk to start the implementation of the project even before the monitoring committee decision for funding.
- C. Costs for project **closure** (e.g. preparation and submission of the last progress report, final report and costs for control of expenditure) are eligible, and must be paid until the deadline for submission of the final report as set in the subsidy contract( i.e. three months after project end).

With regard to **non-eligible expenditure**, provisions are given in the following chapter "Budget lines specification". Nevertheless, the following expenditure should be considered as not eligible in **all** cases:

- ◆ In-kind contributions, as defined in Article 69(1) of regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013;
- ◆ Fines, financial penalties and expenditure on legal disputes and litigation;
- ◆ Costs of gifts, except those not exceeding EUR 50,00 per gift where related to project promotion, communication, publicity or information;
- ◆ Costs related to fluctuation of foreign exchange rate;
- ◆ Interest on debt;
- ◆ Purchase of land;
- ◆ Recoverable VAT except where it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation;
- ◆ Charges for national financial transactions;
- ◆ Costs for alcoholic beverages;
- ◆ Splitting cost items among project partners (i.e. sharing of common costs);
- ◆ Discounts not considered when claiming the costs (only the discounted amount is to be regarded as eligible);
- ◆ Fees between beneficiaries of a same project for services, equipment and work carried out within the project;
- ◆ Any other cost not eligible according to general provisions on eligibility (as in this chapter) as well as specific provisions at budget line level (as provided for in chapter II.7.3 and as further specified in chapter C.2 of the implementation manual).

**ATTENTION**

*Please note that gifts can be eligible up to a maximum amount of EUR 500 for the entire project lifetime. For further information on requirements applicable to gifts please refer to chapter C.1.5.3 and V.2.4.3 of the implementation manual.*

## II.7.3. Budget lines specification

Project budgets must be structured according to the following budget lines:

1. Staff costs
2. Office and administrative expenditure
3. Travel and accommodation costs
4. External expertise and services costs
5. Equipment expenditure
6. Infrastructure and works expenditure

These budget lines apply to all work packages, excluding the management and communication work packages where budget line 6 is not applicable. Specification of investments included in the work plan (see part D, chapter IV.2.4.2) should specifically describe items foreseen under budget lines 5 and 6.

This information is intended to help partners to properly allocate costs to each budget line. More details as well as guidance on how to report these costs is provided in the implementation manual (available for download on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu)).

### BL1. Staff costs

Expenditure on staff costs consists of the gross employment costs of the staff employed by the beneficiary institution (lead partner or project partner) for implementing the project. Staff can either be already employed by the beneficiary or contracted specifically for the project. Staff costs can be reimbursed according to one of the following options:

- A. Real costs; or
- B. Flat rate up to 20 % of direct costs other than staff costs<sup>9</sup>.

Each beneficiary must choose one the above reimbursement options (A. or B.) in the full application form to be submitted within step 2 of the call . The same reimbursement option will apply to all staff members of the beneficiary institution working on the project and it will be set for the entire project duration. **The chosen option cannot be changed during project contracting or implementation.** However, different partners in a same project may choose different options for reimbursing staff costs.

For staff costs reimbursed on a real cost basis, expenditure included under this budget line is limited to:

- A. **Salary payments** fixed in an employment document (employment contract or any other equivalent legal agreement that permits the identification of the employment relationship with the partner's organisation) or by law relating to responsibilities specified in the job de-scription of the staff member concerned. Salary payments have to relate to active- ties which the beneficiary would not carry out if the project concerned was not undertaken. Payments to natural persons working for the beneficiary under a contract other than an employment/work contract may be assimilated to salary pay-ments and such costs are eligible if all the following conditions are respected :
  - ◆ the person works under the beneficiary's instructions and, unless otherwise agreed with the beneficiary, on the beneficiary's premises;
  - ◆ the result of the work carried out belongs to the beneficiary;
  - ◆ the costs are not significantly different from those for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary.

<sup>9</sup> Namely costs under all budget lines except "staff costs" (BL1) and "office and administrative expenditure" (BL2).

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- B. **Any other costs directly linked to salary payments** incurred and paid by the employer (such as employment taxes and social security including pensions) as covered by Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 provided that they are:
- ◆ Fixed in an employment document or by law;
  - ◆ In accordance with the legislation referred to in the employment document and with standard practices in the country and/or institution where the individual staff member is working;
  - ◆ Not recoverable by the employer.

**Unjustified ad-hoc salary increases or bonuses for project purposes are not eligible.**

Additional detailed information on this budget line can be found in chapter C.2.1 of the implementation manual.

## **BL2. Office and administrative expenditure**

Office and administrative expenditure covers operating and administrative expenses occurred by the beneficiary and necessary for the implementation of the project.

Eligible cost items under this budget line are (exhaustive list):

- a. Office rent;
- b. Insurance and taxes related to the buildings where the staff is located and to the equipment of the office (e.g. fire, theft insurances);
- c. Utilities (e.g. electricity, heating, water);
- c. Office supplies;
- d. General accounting provided inside the beneficiary organisation;
- e. Archives;
- f. Maintenance, cleaning and repairs;
- g. Security;
- h. IT systems (operating/administrative IT services of general nature, linked to the implementation of the project);
- i. Communication (e.g. telephone, fax, internet, postal services, business cards);
- j. Bank charges for opening and administering the account or accounts where the implementation of the project requires a separate account to be opened;
- k. Charges for transnational financial transactions.

Office and administrative expenditure shall be reimbursed by the programme according to a flat rate of **15 % of eligible staff costs. Direct costs falling under this budget line are not eligible.**

Additional detailed information on this budget line can be found in chapter C.2.2 of the implementation manual.

## **BL3. Travel and accommodation costs**

Costs under this budget line refer to the expenditure on travel and accommodation of the staff of the beneficiary for missions necessary for the implementation of the project (e.g. participation in project meetings, project site visits, meetings with the programme bodies, seminars, conferences, etc.).

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Eligible cost items under this budget line are (exhaustive list):

- a. Travel costs;
- b. Costs of meals;
- c. Accommodation costs;
- d. Visa costs;
- e. Daily allowances.

Any cost item listed in points a) to d) which is covered by a daily allowance shall not be reimbursed in addition to the daily allowance.

Travel and accommodation costs occurred outside the programme area are eligible only if they are in line with programme general provisions on expenditure for activities implemented outside the programme area, as provided for in chapter II.1.2 and as further detailed in chapter C.3.3 of the implementation manual. Furthermore, travel and accommodation costs outside the programme area are eligible only if they are indicated in the approved application form or they have been authorised by the MA/JS prior to the travel. For more information on the location of project activities please refer also to chapter II.2 as well as part D, chapter IV.2.4.5.

Travel and accommodation costs of external experts and service providers can be reimbursed only under the external expertise and services budget line. The same applies to travel and accommodation costs occurred by institutions acting as “associated partners”.

Additional detailed information on this budget line can be found in chapter C.2.3 of the implementation manual.

#### **BL4. External expertise and services costs**

Costs under this budget line refer to external expertise and services provided by a public or private body or a natural person outside of the beneficiary organisation. The external experts and service providers are sub-contracted to carry out certain tasks or activities which are strictly linked to the project and are essential for its effective implementation (e.g. studies and surveys, translation, promotion and communication, services related to meetings and events). External expertise and services costs are paid on the basis of contracts or written agreements and against invoices or requests for reimbursement. Eligible cost items under this budget line are (exhaustive list):

- a. Studies or surveys (e.g. evaluations, strategies, concept notes, design plans, handbooks);
- b. Training (e.g. venue and trainers);
- c. Translations;
- d. IT systems and website development, modifications and updates (e.g. setting-up and/or update of a project IT system or website);
- e. Promotion, communication, publicity or information;
- f. Financial management;
- g. Services related to the organisation and implementation of events or meetings (including rent, catering or interpretation);
- h. Participation in events (e.g. registration fees);
- i. Legal consultancy and notarial services, technical and financial expertise, other consultancy and accountancy services;
- j. Intellectual property rights;
- k. Verification and validation of expenditure carried out by authorized national controllers;



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- l. Provision of guarantees by a bank or other financial institution where required by the programme;
- m. Travel and accommodation for external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers;
- n. Other specific expertise and services needed for the project.

External expertise and services have to be duly specified in the full application form (step 2) by describing at least the nature and quantity of the expertise/service, the link to the relevant deliverable or output as listed in the work plan and the related budget of the concerned project partner.

Eligibility of costs for external expertise and services is subject to the full respect of EU, national and programme procurement rules (please refer to chapter II.7.7 in this regard) and must comply with the basic principles as described in chapter C.1.5.1. of the implementation manual.

Costs referring to project-related tasks sub-contracted by the beneficiary to in-house bodies, as well as costs referring to cooperation between public bodies, are eligible as long as they are charged on a real costs basis thus without any profit margin (with the exception of office and administrative expenditure, to be calculated as a flat rate of 15 % of eligible direct staff costs). Such costs shall be accounted under each relevant budget line (and not under external expertise and services), according to the nature of the service provided, as well as under the same general and specific provisions on eligibility, reporting and audit trail applicable to the relevant budget lines.

Sub-contracting to in-house-bodies as well as cooperation between public bodies shall comply with the applicable public procurement provisions (please see in this regard also chapter C.1.5.1. of the implementation manual).

Even if the programme does not set ceilings for this budget line, the share of external expertise **should not exceed 50 % of the total eligible budget** as beneficiaries of a project should be the actual implementers of the project. Higher shares are possible but must be duly justified.

Additional detailed information on this budget line can be found in chapter C.2.4 of the implementation manual.

### **BL5. Equipment expenditure**

Costs under this budget line refer to equipment purchased, rented or leased by a beneficiary which is essential for the implementation of the project. This includes costs of equipment already in possession of the beneficiary organisation and used to carry out project activities. Eligible cost items under this budget line are (exhaustive list):

- a. Office equipment;
- b. IT hardware and software;
- c. Furniture and fittings;
- d. Laboratory equipment;
- e. Machines and instruments,
- f. Tools or devices;
- g. Vehicles;
- h. Other specific equipment needed for the project.

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When drafting the proposal, the above equipment items shall be categorised within the following two categories:

1. **Equipment for general (office) use** as computers, office furniture, etc. which is necessary for the implementation of the project and which is used for project purposes only and which is not already included under the “office and administrative expenditure” budget line. Equipment for general (office) use **shall be reimbursed as depreciable asset** in compliance with national accounting rules and internal accounting policies of the beneficiary. The full cost of such equipment is eligible **solely** in the case that the depreciation period is shorter than the time lap between the purchase of the equipment and the end of the project.
2. **Thematic equipment** directly linked to (or forming part of) the project outputs, which will be used by beneficiaries and target groups in line with project objectives. Thematic equipment must be in line with the programme requirements for investments (as in chapter II.3) in order to be regarded as eligible. Thematic equipment **can be reimbursed in full**<sup>10</sup>.

All equipment items have to be duly specified in the full application form in step 2 by describing at least the nature and quantity of the equipment to be purchased, the link with the relevant deliverable or output as listed in the work plan and the related budget of the concerned project partner. During project implementation, purchase of any equipment not explicitly mentioned in the application form will have to be subject to prior approval by the MA/JS.

Eligibility of costs for equipment is subject to the full respect of EU, national and programme procurement rules and must comply with the basic principles as described in chapter C.1.5.1 of the implementation manual.

Moreover, equipment items listed in the application form are only eligible:

- ◆ If they have not already been financed by other EU grants or third party subsidies (as provided for in chapter C.1.2 of the implementation manual)
- ◆ If they have not already been depreciated
- ◆ If they are not already included as indirect costs under the office and administration budget line

“Thematic equipment” for which the exclusive use in the project cannot be demonstrated shall be charged pro-rata on the basis of a transparent method set in place by the beneficiary for allocating the share of its use in the project. Opposite, “equipment for general (office) use” for which the exclusive use in the project cannot be demonstrated shall be considered as not eligible.

Additional detailed information on this budget line can be found in chapter C.2.5 of the implementation manual.

### BL6. Infrastructure and works expenditure

Expenditure for works<sup>11</sup> refers to costs incurred by the beneficiary for the execution of an infrastructure which is essential for the implementation of the project.

Works expenditure may refer either to an object (e.g. a building) that will be set up ex-novo or to the adaptation of an already existing infrastructure. Whatever the case, these costs are only eligible if in line with the programme requirements for investments as provided for in chapter II.3.

Works expenditure shall be limited to elements listed in **annex II of the mentioned Directive**.

Article 2(1) of the Directive 2014/24/EU defines a “work” as “the outcome of building or civil engineering works taken as a whole which is sufficient in itself to fulfil an economic or technical function”. Furthermore, Annex II of this Directive provides a detailed list of all elements that are eligible under this budget line.

<sup>10</sup> I.e. outside depreciation schemes if in line with national accountability rules and internal accountability policies of the beneficiary.

<sup>11</sup> In the sense of the definition of ‘work’ provided for in Article 2(1) of the Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26.02.2014.

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Costs of feasibility studies, environmental impact assessments, architectural/engineering activities and any other expertise needed for the realisation of the infrastructure and not comprised in the aforementioned Directive (see tip box) shall be allocated under “Staff” or “External expertise and services” budget lines (depending whether carried out internally by the beneficiary or with the support of external suppliers respectively).

Infrastructure and works items have to be duly specified in the full application form in step 2 to allow for a detailed presentation and evaluation of costs by describing at least the nature and quantity of each item foreseen, the link with the relevant output as listed in the work plan and the related budget of the concerned partner. The implementation of infrastructure and works not explicitly mentioned in the application form has to be subject to prior approval by the competent programme bodies.

**Costs for infrastructure and works outside the CENTRAL EUROPE programme area are not eligible.**

Eligibility of costs for infrastructure and works is subject to the full respect of EU, national and programme procurement rules. They must also comply with the basic principles as described in chapter C.1.5.1 of the implementation manual.

Furthermore, and depending on the nature of the intervention linked to the works to be carried out, the eligibility of costs for infrastructure and works is subject to the following:

- ◆ Fulfilment of all compulsory requirements set by Community and national legislation on environmental policies
- ◆ Fulfilment of all EU compulsory requirements on publicity
- ◆ Where applicable, availability of authorisations by competent national/regional/local authorities (building permission)
- ◆ The land and/or buildings where the works will be carried out must be in the ownership of the beneficiary

Infrastructure and works expenditure cannot refer to items financed by other EU or third party subsidies (as provided for in chapter C.1.2 of the implementation manual) and must not be already depreciated. In the case of works being part of a larger infrastructural investment, the part realised by the project must be clearly and univocally identifiable.

Additional detailed information on this budget line can be found in chapter C.2.6 of the implementation manual.

## II.7.4. Preparation costs

The partnership decides which partners will receive what share of the reimbursement of preparation costs. Even a single partner might advocate the entire lump-sum. It is strongly recommended to achieve a joint agreement within the partnership on the distribution of preparation costs reflecting the actual preparation activities carried out by the partners.

Approved projects which successfully signed the subsidy contract with the MA are entitled to receive reimbursement of their preparation costs in the form of a lump-sum. The reimbursement of these costs will follow the principles detailed below:

- ◆ The lump sum will amount to **EUR 15.000** of total eligible expenditure per project
- ◆ The lump sum covers all costs linked to the preparation and/or contracting<sup>12</sup> of the project until the day on which the final application form fulfilling all conditions for approval set by the MC has been finally accepted by the MA/JS;
- ◆ The ERDF contribution effectively granted to the project is linked to the actual co-financing rate applicable to the partner(s) to whom the lump sum is allocated in accordance to the approved application form

In order to apply for the reimbursement of preparation costs, the preparation costs budget must be indicated in the full application form (step 2), giving information on the amount allocated to the concerned project partner(s) (for further information please see part D, chapter IV.2.5).

<sup>12</sup> In the project contracting phase the partnership is often requested to revise its application forms following conditions for approval set by the monitoring committee. This might also include a meeting with the MA/JS in Vienna. For further information on contracting please refer to part D, chapter V.5.

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After the signature of the subsidy contract and completion of the section “Supplementary information” in the electronic Monitoring System (as provided for in chapter A.1.3 of the implementation manual), the lump sum will be automatically transferred to the bank account of the lead partner. It is then the lead partner’s responsibility to transfer the agreed share of the lump sum to the respective project partners.

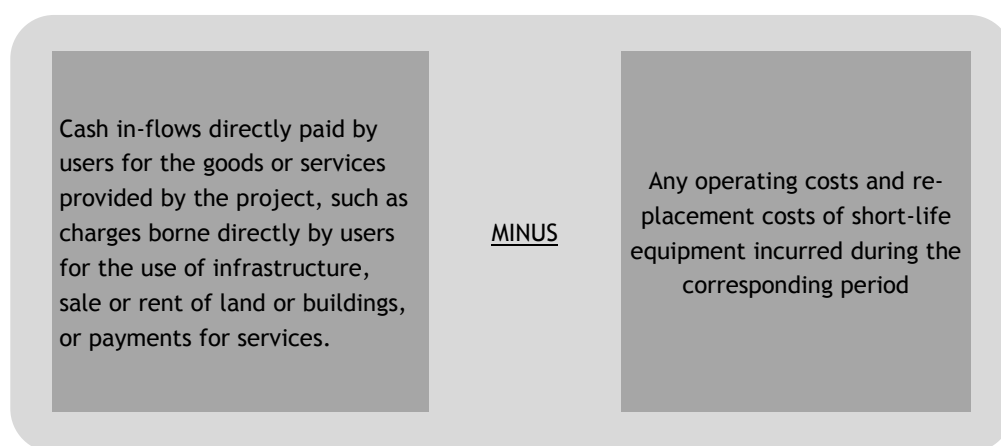
Any difference between the granted lump sum and the real costs occurred for preparation is neither checked nor further monitored by the programme.

In case the project is not implemented following the signing of the subsidy contract, the MA may recover the ERDF granted for preparation costs.

## II.7.5. Revenues

As a general principle<sup>13</sup>, eligible expenditure of a project (and consequently the ERDF contribution to it) shall be reduced according to the net revenue generated by the project both during its implementation as well as until three years after its completion.

**Net revenues are:**



Please note that operating cost-savings generated by the project shall be treated as net revenue unless they are offset by an equal reduction in operating subsidies.

In case of revenue-generating projects, applicants are to calculate the expected net revenues as provided for in Article 61(3) b) of the Common Provisions Regulation and as further detailed under Articles 15 to 19 of the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 480/2014.

Expected net revenues are to be indicated in the full application form (step 2) in order to offset the corresponding ERDF contribution. Applicants shall not indicate expected net revenues in the application form in the following cases:

- ♦ If the total budget of the project does not exceed EUR 1.000.000<sup>14</sup>;
- ♦ If the specific project output generating net revenue is state aid relevant (for further information on state aid please refer to chapter II.7.7).

<sup>13</sup> In accordance with Articles 61 and 65(8) of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013.

<sup>14</sup> Please note that even if a project below EUR 1.000.000 total budget is exempted to include the forecast of expected net revenues in the application form, such project - in case of approval - must record and deduct from the ERDF contribution net revenues generated during implementation or after closure.

## II.7.6. Conversion into Euro

The project budget must be developed in Euro and, in case of approval, reporting of project expenditure to the MA/JS shall be made solely in Euro.

All beneficiaries located outside the Euro-zone shall convert expenditure incurred and paid in national currency into Euro using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the European Commission in the month during which that expenditure was submitted for verification by the concerned partner to its national controller.

## II.7.7. Other financial requirements

Even if detailed information on financial requirements related to project implementation is provided in the programme implementation manual, key principles explained in this chapter must be kept in mind by applicants when preparing their project proposals.

### Compliance with EU policies and other rules

#### Public procurement

The acquisition by means of a public contract of works, supplies or services from economic operators is subject to rules on public procurement. Such rules aim at securing transparent and fair conditions for competing on the common market and shall be followed by the beneficiaries when procuring the above mentioned services, works or supplies on the market.

Rules differ depending on the kind of goods and/or services to be purchased, as well as the value of the purchase and the legal status of the awarding institution. They are set at the following levels:

1. EU rules as set by the applicable directives on the matter<sup>15</sup>
2. National rules<sup>16</sup>
3. Programme rules (see specification below).

In addition to what is set out in the procurement laws, all relevant laws related to procurement (e.g. rules on contracting, intellectual property, business law etc.) are to be observed as well.

Please note that, differing from the hierarchy of rules concerning the eligibility of expenditure (see chapter II.7.1), in case of public procurement all applicable EU and national rules are on a higher hierarchical level than the rules set by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme and they must be obeyed.

With regard specifically to **programme rules**, in order to guarantee a harmonised standard in contracting procedures across Member States and to accomplish sound financial management principle (as mentioned in chapter II.7.2), the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme requires from beneficiaries to give evidence of adequate market searches for contracting amounts comprised between **EUR 5,000,00** (excl. VAT) and the threshold set by the applicable EU or national rules above which prior publication of the tender notice and the conduction of a competitive procedure is required. This means that in such cases, **unless stricter national rules apply**, beneficiaries must **perform and document the execution of adequate market searches** (e.g. through collecting bids, using centralised e-procurement services)<sup>17</sup>. This is meant to provide a sound knowledge and sufficient information on the relevant market allowing for a sound comparison of offers in terms of price and/or quality and a profound assessment of the adequacy of the price to be paid.

It is strongly recommended to become familiar with applicable procurement rules and, if necessary, seek the advice of procurement experts early enough before launching an award procedure.

<sup>15</sup> More information on EU rules on public procurement can be found at the following link: [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/publicprocurement/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/index_en.htm)

<sup>16</sup> National rules include laws on public procurement, related delegated or implementing acts or any other generally applicable legally binding rules and decisions.

<sup>17</sup> A combination of several market searches for a same purchase can also be made in order to ensure the accomplishment of the sound financial management principle.

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Lead partners and project partners are recommended to carefully define their legal status and thoroughly analyse the legal terms of the mentioned Directives on public procurement with regard to their applicability.

The adequacy of costs must always be ensured and demonstrated. For contracts having a value below 5.000 Euro (excl. VAT), however, beneficiaries do not have to give evidence of a specific selection procedure conducted unless stricter national rules apply.

Public authorities and other institutions falling under the scope of application of the procurement laws<sup>18</sup> must comply with the applicable rules on public procurement.

Institutions not falling under the scope of application of the public procurement laws (e.g. private companies for most procurement activities as defined under the “classical directive”<sup>19</sup>) are exempt from the application of public procurement laws. Notwithstanding this, such institutions have to observe the basic principles on which the procurement norms are based and ensure the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price. Please check national rules and guidelines in this respect which may set specific/ stricter rules applicable also to institutions not falling under the scope of application of the public procurement laws. The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has developed specific procedures to be followed by such institutions when procuring works, supplies or services. These are laid down in chapter C.1.5.1 of the implementation manual (available for download on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu)).

### State aid

Public support granted by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme must comply with state aid rules applicable at the point of time when the public support is granted. According to Article 107 (ex Article 87) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, state aid is defined as “any aid granted by a Member State or through State resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods”, therefore affecting trade between Member States.

In practical terms, state aid applies when all five criteria listed below are met:

1. The recipient of the aid is an “undertaking”, i.e. an entity engaged in an economic activity in the context of the proposed project. Any project partner offering good or services on a market in the context of the proposed project is an undertaking. This is the case regardless of its legal status and whether its aim is to make profit or not. An undertaking can be an SME, a large company, a public body, a charity, an NGO, an association, a university, etc.
2. The aid comes from the State, which is always the case for any Interreg programme.
3. The aid gives an economic advantage (a benefit) which an undertaking would not have obtained under normal market conditions.
4. The aid is selectively favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods.
5. The aid distorts or threatens to distort competition and trade within the European Union.

In the framework of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, **public support given by the programme to undertakings will be granted under the *de minimis* rule<sup>20</sup>.** This implies that undertakings will receive grants from the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme only if they have not received public aid under the *de minimis* rule totalling more than EUR 200.000 within three fiscal years from the date of granting the aid<sup>21</sup>. This ceiling is reduced to EUR 100.000 in the road transport sector while other sectors as agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries have lower ceilings. Furthermore, aid to export-related activities and aid contingent upon the use of domestic over imported good cannot be granted under the *de minimis* rule.

<sup>18</sup> Namely “contracting authorities” within the meaning of Directive 2004/18/EC or “contracting entities” within the meaning of Directive 2004/17/EC as further amended.

<sup>19</sup> More information on EU rules on public procurement can be found under: [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/publicprocurement/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/index_en.htm)

<sup>20</sup> As provided in Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 on *de minimis* aid.

<sup>21</sup> Date of signature of the subsidy contract.

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Public aid considered for the applicable de minimis ceiling comprises all aids granted by the national, regional or local authorities, regardless of whether the resources are provided from domestic sources or are partly financed by the European Union. However, this will not affect the possibility of an undertaking to receive public support under other state aid schemes.

As a consequence undertakings (i.e. not only private companies but also public authorities, NGOs etc.) carrying out state aid relevant activities in the project might receive limitations on the public contribution to their budgets.

### EXAMPLE

*A private company located in Austria and acting in the IT sector has applied for funding in an Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE project. The total budget of this company in the project is EUR 250.000, out of which EUR 100.000 refers to a specific project activity which will give an economic advantage to the company (production of a new IT tool which will be ready to be sold on the market). The company will co-finance its project budget through own resources.*

*This company also received a national grant of EUR 150.000 under the de minimis rule in the year before applying for funding through the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.*

*According to the de minimis limitation of up to EUR 200.000 in three fiscal years, the aid granted by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme will be calculated as follows:*

- ⇒ ***ERDF contribution to non-state aid relevant project activities = EUR 120.000 (80 % of EUR 150.000)***
- ⇒ ***ERDF contribution to state aid relevant project activities = EUR 50.000 (80 % of EUR 100.000 = EUR 80.000 minus EUR 30.000. The reduction by EUR 30.000 follows the reaching of the de minimis ceiling of EUR 200.000)***
- ⇒ ***Total ERDF contribution granted by the programme to the company = EUR 170.000 (68 %).***

Applications submitted within step 2 of the call will undergo a specific “state aid assessment” (as mentioned in part D, chapter V.2.e) focusing on the five criteria listed above, with particular attention to the assessment of the status of “undertaking” of project lead partners and project partners (criterion 1 above) and of the materialisation of an economic advantage for the undertaking (criterion 3 above). This assessment will be based on information included in the full application form as well as on self-declarations provided by applicants within step 2 of the first call.

In compliance with Article 3(3) d) of Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 the Interreg CE Programme does not support undertakings in difficulty<sup>22</sup>. In the occurrence that the LP and/or any of the PPs is in the situation of undertaking in difficulty, the affected institution is to leave the partnership following the procedure described in chapter D.3.2 of the implementation manual. Furthermore, in such cases the MA is entitled to terminate, in whole or in part, the subsidy contract and/or to demand repayment of the granted subsidy.

Further information on state aid can be found on the European Commission’s DG Competition website ([http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state\\_aid/overview/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/overview/index_en.html)) where also a comprehensive guideline on the notion of state aid<sup>23</sup> will be soon made available. Applicants may also consult relevant national authorities to obtain more specific information on rules and limitations concerning state aid.

<sup>22</sup> As defined in point 24 (in conjunction with point 20) of the “Guidelines on State aid for rescuing and restructuring non-financial undertakings in difficulty” (Communication from the Commission No. 2014/C 249/01 of 31.07.2014).

<sup>23</sup> A draft version available at the time of writing can be accessed at [http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2014\\_state\\_aid\\_notion/draft\\_guidance\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2014_state_aid_notion/draft_guidance_en.pdf).



## Part B

### What projects we are looking for

Applicants are strongly advised to carefully plan the budget allocation to reporting periods within step 2 of the call for proposals (see part D, chapter IV.2.5), by realistically reflecting the actual spending capacity of the project as well as the time needed for paying out costs incurred. For further information on this please consult part C, chapter VII.

## Information and communication (branding)

Responsibilities of lead partners and project partners related to information and communication measures (including a set of instructions for project communication and branding) are laid down in Articles 115-117 and annex XII of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 as well as in Articles 4-5 of the Implementing Regulation (EU) No 821/2014. In addition to these, specific programme requirements also apply (as defined in chapter C.1.5.3 of the implementation manual). Please note that all these rules do not only apply to promotional material but are also relevant for the organisation of meetings and events and, if foreseen by the project, the purchase of physical objects and the realisation of works.

More details as well as guidance on information and communication requirements are provided in the implementation manual (available for download on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu)).

## Shared costs

The practice of splitting cost items among project partners (i.e. sharing of common costs) is not allowed in the framework of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. Accordingly, the budget allocated to a project partner shall fully reflect the activities actually implemented by that partner.

## Financial performance and decommitment of funds

In order to be considered as eligible, expenditure must have been actually paid out following verification by national controllers. Financial performance of projects will be measured exclusively on the basis of paid out expenditure.

It is to be kept in mind that programmes may get funds decommitted by the European Commission<sup>24</sup> in case that allocations set in the financial tables of the Cooperation programme are not translated into effective requests for payment to the European Commission within the set timeframe. Should this loss of funds result from projects lagging behind their payment targets based on the spending forecast included in the approved application form (as further explained in part D, chapter IV.2.5), the programme might have to reduce the ERDF contribution to these projects. This would occur in the framework of the mid-term review carried out by the MA/JS (as further explained in part C, chapter V). Furthermore, irrespective whether the programme is subject or not to a decommitment of funds, the MC may decide to de-commit funds from projects that, following the mid-term review (see part C chapter V and section B.5 of the implementation manual), show a low performance.

<sup>24</sup>As provided for in Article 136 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.



**Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme**

# **Application Manual**

**Version 2 (September 2015)**

**Part C: How to develop a good project**

# Part C

## How to develop a good project

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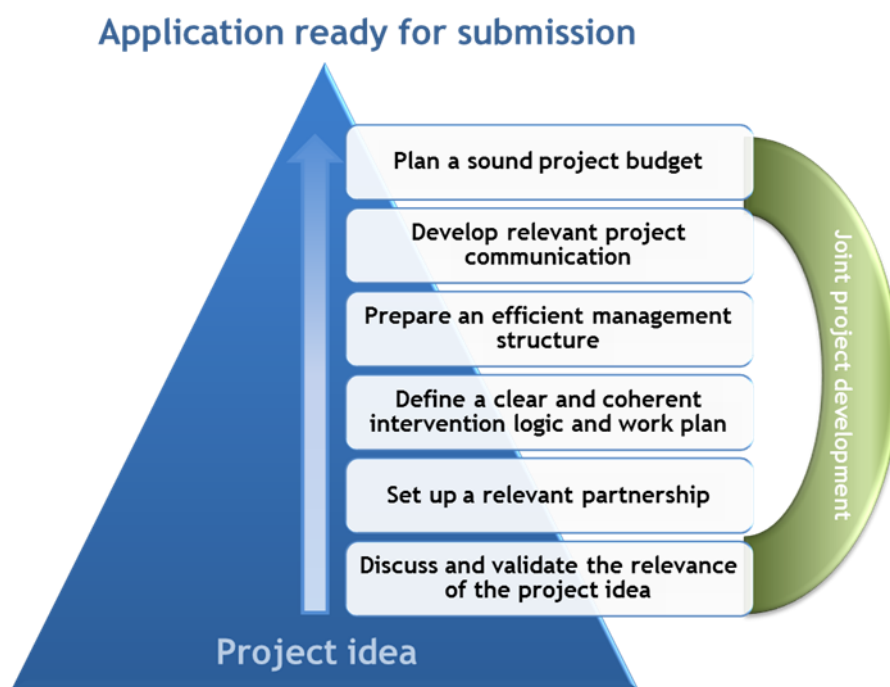
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## I. Introduction

The preparation of a project application is a challenging process, especially in an international cooperation context. It usually starts off with a first project idea which is then further developed through the inputs of future project partners and according to programme guidance. It is therefore recommended to follow the structure of the application form in order to see which information is expected and not to miss out on any relevant topics.

The following chapters aim at helping you in preparing your application form. The “How to get started” chapter gives you practical hints for advancing from the initial project idea to a successful application. The subsequent chapters guide you through the workflow from the project idea to the application ready for submission (as illustrated in the figure below).

Figure 1 - Project development: from a project idea to the application



Achievements of CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013 projects are summarised in six thematic studies covering the topics of innovation, transport, environment, energy, demographic change and cultural resources. They are published on the programme website at [www.central2013.eu/studies](http://www.central2013.eu/studies). It is strongly recommended to get familiar with achievements of past projects in your thematic field.

## II. How to get started

### When you have a project idea:

- ◆ First of all read carefully all parts and chapters of this manual.
- ◆ Verify whether the idea clearly contributes to the chosen programme specific objective and whether transnational cooperation brings real added value to solving/advancing the issue addressed. Consider whether other EU programmes could better fit your project idea.
- ◆ Check whether the programme requirements, such as the partnership requirements, location of partners, location of activities etc., can be fulfilled with your project idea (see also part B, chapter II).

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### How to develop a good project

Become a member of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Community by registering through the programme website. Joining the community allows you to get access to:

➔ Contact details of potential lead applicants that posted their project idea

➔ Search function for potential partners according to themes and territories

➔ Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE newflash with the latest transnational news

- ◆ Have a look at past projects of CENTRAL EUROPE and other EU programmes (other territorial cooperation programmes, LIFE+, Intelligent Energy Europe, 7th Research Framework Programme, HORIZON 2020 etc.). This will help you to get an idea of which types of activities have been funded within the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme and which results are already available on which further build your project. In any case, duplication of previous activities and outputs has to be avoided.
- ◆ Check-out project ideas already posted on the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE website in order to get an idea of which projects are already under preparation or search for partners in your thematic field and find potential synergies.
- ◆ Get in contact with the national contact point of your country which will give you first-hand information on the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme and support you in identifying potential partners.
- ◆ Exchange with potential partners in order to further develop the project idea and start building the partnership. Keep in mind that the project idea needs to remain sufficiently open for further development and inputs of partners (e.g. experience, competence, regional challenges and needs) in order to ensure benefits to the whole partnership, contributing to its commitment and ownership of future results. Focus your search on relevant and competent partners (for more information see also chapter IV).
- ◆ Early agree within the partnership on who will be the lead applicant. This institution will be steering the further development of the project idea and will prepare the project application. In case of approval, this institution will be responsible for the whole project implementation. Keep in mind that the lead applicant cannot change between steps 1 and 2 (see part D, chapter I in this regard). The lead applicant should be an institution having sound experience and capacity in managing EU projects. Please note that, once a project proposal is approved for funding and contracted, the lead applicant becomes the project lead partner.
- ◆ Use the opportunity of an individual consultation with the joint secretariat of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme in order to get initial feedback on the project idea and hints you should consider when preparing the application.

### When turning the project idea into a project application:

- ◆ Set a limited number of specific objectives for your project (not more than three). They must be specific and relevant for the programme and the involved regions, and ambitious while still being realistic to be reached within the timeframe of the project. Keep in mind that these objectives need to be clearly defined and that their achievement within the project duration will need to be demonstrated (for more information see also chapter III).
- ◆ Transnational activities should bring a clear advantage to all project partners. The created added value should clearly activate synergies going even beyond the project partnership: just summing up local and/or regional actions is therefore not sufficient for a project to be successful.
- ◆ Keep in mind that your project needs to be innovative. Previous achievements and already available knowledge should be used and valorised. Please see the tip box on CENTRAL EUROPE thematic studies.
- ◆ Plan the resources (human and financial) for the project carefully. Keep in mind that:

⇒ Programme working language is English

## Part C

### How to develop a good project

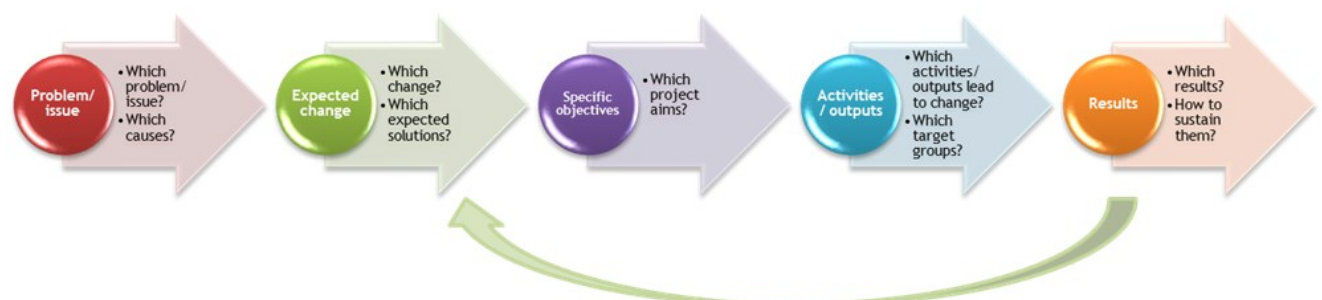
- ⇒ Enough staff should be available already at the project start date and during the entire project duration (both at the lead partner and partner institutions)
- ⇒ No pre-financing is provided. Reporting is done on a six-monthly basis and retroactive reimbursement of approved co-financing takes place some months after the end of a respective reporting period (for more information see also chapter VII)
- ◆ Plan an **effective project management structure** with clear decision making procedures. This will support a good information flow and coordination within the partnership and is the basis for smooth implementation of the project. Remember that quality control and reporting are also important parts of project management with direct influence on the quality of reports - and consequently the time for ERDF reimbursement (for more information see also chapter V).
- ◆ Design project **communication** in line with specific project objectives. Start planning communication objectives, audiences, approaches and activities already in the project development phase. When designing your communication bear in mind that communication objectives are intrinsically linked to project objectives. Ask yourself how communication can help reaching a project objective. Relevant communication often goes beyond mere publicity and dissemination (for more information see also chapter VI).
- ◆ Think about the **sustainability** and uptake of your project results. Keep in mind that transnational cooperation projects often have a seeding function: they are supposed to kick-off further developments (e.g. a larger investment) and improvements (e.g. an improved policy). The uptake of results, the deployment at a larger scale and/or the mainstreaming is a crucial success factor to be already considered during project development. Communication also plays an important role in achieving sustainability.
- ◆ Ensure **ownership of results** by foreseeing the direct involvement of concerned target groups and stakeholders.

## III. Developing the project intervention logic: from problem to solution (theory of change)

The **theory of change** should be at the heart of each Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE project<sup>1</sup>.

Projects have to develop an intervention logic taking into account the attempted change as the basis for result-orientation. The project intervention logic will have to show how a desired change will be achieved. It should thus reflect the current situation (e.g. a problem), its underlying causes and the change which the project seeks to achieve by implementing the planned activities. It also needs to indicate what has to happen in order to trigger the change. The following figure illustrates the process and includes related basic questions to be addressed.

Figure 2 - How to develop the project intervention logic



<sup>1</sup> The “theory of change” is defined as “the description of the sequence of events that is expected to lead to a particular desired outcome” (Davies, 2012).

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### How to develop a good project

Project development should start from describing the initial situation, i.e. the problem and/or issue to be addressed. Project partners should then think about what they want to achieve and define expected outcomes and results. These envisaged results have to reflect the desired change and need to be translated into specific project objectives.

After the intervention logic is set in place (starting from the initial situation and ending with the envisaged change), preconditions, activities and outputs necessary to reach the objectives and results need to be defined.

Please distinguish between following types of project objectives:

Project main objective describes the general (strategic) and long-term change which the project seeks to support for the benefit of its target group(s). Usually a project sets only one main project objective which is further broken down into:

- ➔ Project specific objectives which describe the specific and immediate effects of the project and can be realistically achieved within the project life time. Usually a project defines not more than three specific project objectives.

In order to be funded, the project's intervention logic must be coherent with the targeted specific objective of the programme (see also part B, chapter I.1 providing detailed information on the required links between the programme and the project intervention logic).

When developing the intervention logic the following questions on expected results (i.e. the change the project is aiming for) should be addressed:

- ◆ What is the issue or problem that you want to address?
- ◆ What do you see as the underlying causes of the issue or problem?
- ◆ Which change do you want to achieve? What would a solution to the issue/problem look like?
- ◆ Who would benefit?
- ◆ How can the project influence the situation? Which activities and outputs are needed?
- ◆ How can you measure the change caused by the project?

*Please note that only activities directly contributing to the set objectives and expected results can be supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.*

Practical steps for defining the project intervention logic in the application form are provided in part D, chapter IV.2.3.2.

## IV. Setting up a relevant project partnership

Having relevant and competent partners on board is essential for both setting up and successfully implementing a transnational cooperation project.

- ◆ In the project development phase: the continuous input of all partners from the beginning ensures the commitment and the joint ownership of the project idea and the project application.
- ◆ In the project implementation phase: the active participation of all partners ensures a transnational approach which builds on existing knowledge in different regions. This enables them to tackle shared issues together and helps them to go beyond the adding up of single outputs. The contributions of all partners are necessary to reach the project objectives and expected results.

The main points to be kept in mind when setting up a sound partnership are explained below.

## What is required from the lead applicant/lead partner?

The lead partner takes the role of the “engine” of the partnership, coordinating the work of the partners and being also the link between the project and the programme (MA/JS).

The lead applicant (institution) is responsible for coordinating and driving the partnership from the project idea until the finalisation of the project application. The lead applicant formally submits the application and is thus responsible for contents and commitments expressed in the application form as well as for responsibilities arising in case of funding (for the latter please see part B, chapter II.1.3). Therefore, the lead applicant should be an institution experienced in the management of projects supported by EU funds. The commitment of the lead applicant is even more important as **no change of lead applicant is allowed between steps 1 and 2 of the application procedure** (see part D, chapter I).

Once the project is approved for funding, the lead applicant becomes the lead partner and, therefore, the contractual counterpart of the programme (signing the subsidy contract with the managing authority). Following the lead partner principle, the lead partner is responsible for ensuring sound management and successful implementation of the entire project (for further details on the lead partner principle see also chapter V as well as part B, chapter II.1.3 on the general requirements).

As a consequence the lead applicant/lead partner institution should, at least, have the following profile (most skills are also applicable to project partners):

- ◆ Experienced in the management of EU funded projects
- ◆ Prepared to take a leading and driving role within the partnership
- ◆ Having sufficient capacity (institutional, financial and human resources) to prepare the project application and to manage the implementation of the project
- ◆ Having the thematic knowledge and expertise relevant for the project
- ◆ Being committed to the project throughout the entire project application and implementation phases

## What should a partnership look like?

The quality of a project depends largely on an integrated composition of its partnership. A good partnership should pool all skills and competences of relevant institutions necessary to address the issues tackled by the project in order to achieve the set objectives.

When building a partnership, the following general aspects should be taken into account:

- ◆ Focus your partnership on institutions **relevant for reaching the project results** (e.g. thematically, geographically, level of governance).
- ◆ Involve as project partners only institutions whose **interests are closely linked to the project objectives** and planned interventions. They should also have the capacity to create strong links to target groups addressed by the project.
- ◆ Apply a result-oriented approach by involving institutions who are supposed to realise and subsequently **implement the project outputs and results**. Ensure that they have the required **competences** (e.g. involve environmental authorities if you work on the development of environmental policies).

## Part C

### How to develop a good project

Even if the programme does not request it, lead applicants are recommended to set up a basic agreement with project partners already in step 1 of the application process (e.g. through letters of commitment). This will help to ensure continuity, as there are only limited changes within the partnership allowed between both steps of the application phase (see part D, chapter I).

- ◆ Ensure a balanced partnership in terms of number of institutions involved per country. Distribution of project activities and responsibilities as well as related budgets should be also adequately balanced.
- ◆ Ensure that decision makers (e.g. ministries) are either directly included in the partnership or can be effectively reached by the project partners.
- ◆ Where necessary, involve expert organisations (e.g. universities, research institutions) as a source of knowledge.
- ◆ Keep the partnership size manageable (recommended maximum of 8 - 12 partners). Having a broad partnership should not be the goal when preparing a project.
- ◆ Ensure the commitment of all partners from the very beginning. In the application phase only limited partner changes are allowed between the step 1 and 2 of the call (see section part D, chapter I). In the implementation phase partner changes are to be regarded as exceptional cases, posing a risk factor to the entire project.
- ◆ Institutions from outside the programme area should only be involved in exceptional and well justified cases. Their involvement should bring a clear benefit to the programme area and add value to the partnership.

## Multilevel governance

Decision making competences are often shared by actors at different governance levels. Vertical integration (i.e. involvement of institutions representing various levels of administration like national, regional and local levels) is therefore expected to help reaching the intended structural change as well as policy improvement and implementation. It is recommended to:

- ◆ Create linkages (institutional, financial or informational) between the various levels of the governance system in a country/region;
- ◆ Explore a mix of horizontal and vertical cooperation approaches for tackling the challenges in the project.

The partnership needs to be tailored to challenges, objectives and results defined by the project. Two possible approaches (among others) which have proven to be effective for building a partnership are:

- ◆ Triple and quadruple helix approach, which requires the horizontal integration of competences from various sectors (research, public and business sectors and civil society). This approach is most fitting when for example new solutions, strategies and services are developed by the private sector, supported by public authorities with expertise coming from research.
- ◆ Combined vertical and horizontal cooperation, which brings together different governance levels in a Member State or region while, at the same time, involving similar types of institutions located in different countries. This allows creating multiple cooperation layers and therefore adding value to the project and its outcomes (see also below multilevel governance).



Please note that procurement rules need to be strictly followed when selecting and sub-contracting providers of external expertise. (see also chapter C.1.5.1 of the implementation manual<sup>2</sup>).

## Complementary external expertise

Due to the nature and complexity of issues addressed by transnational projects it may not always be possible to cover all required expertise and competences within the partnership as such. In these cases external expertise could be sought to complement and bridge knowledge gaps to support the partnership in carrying out specific activities or delivering concrete services.

Please keep in mind that companies whose main scope of activities within their business profile, as well as their project role, consists of project coordination, management, communication or knowledge management or other activities that are of a mere executive or supporting character (service providers) cannot be involved as project partners. If required, such institutions should be sub-contracted (for further details see part B, chapter II.1.1).

## Partner experience and capacity

Transnational cooperation projects can be challenging in terms of management and implementation, especially for newcomers. While this leads to the recommendation to choose an experienced lead partner it shall explicitly not exclude newcomers from participating in projects. However, before joining a partnership the following has to be considered:

- ◆ Staff involved in the project should be able to speak and write in English.
- ◆ Since no pre-financing is provided, partner institutions should have sufficient financial capacity to pre-finance and implement the foreseen activities, keeping in mind that the time-lapse between the payment of project costs and the ERDF reimbursement usually takes some months.
- ◆ Even though the programme does not limit the participation of a same institution in several projects, the technical, financial and administrative capacity of the partner to accomplish project tasks and responsibilities has to be ensured.
- ◆ Rules between funding programmes might differ and, even if partners are experienced in other funding programmes, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE rules (based on rules applicable to ERDF co-funded programmes) have to be respected.

<sup>2</sup> available for download on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

## V. Developing a sound management structure

### Management framework

- ◆ The partnership is governed by the lead partner principle. This means that among the partners implementing the project, one institution is appointed as lead partner acting as project interface with the programme (MA/JS). The lead partner, in addition to the responsibility of implementing its part of the thematic project activities, is also responsible for ensuring sound management (including internal communication) and successful implementation of the entire project. The lead partner is the contractual counterpart of the programme (signing the subsidy contract with the MA).
- ◆ A partnership agreement establishes the legal base between the lead partner and all project partners. It has to be drawn up at the beginning of the project and lays down all arrangements for the relations of the lead partner with the project partners, such as the responsibilities and contributions to the work plan, reporting requirements, financial provisions, etc. A programme template with the minimum requirements of a partnership agreement is available on the programme website [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).
- ◆ At project level the management is under the responsibility of the lead partner. If the lead partner has no sufficient internal competences or capacities for project, financial or communication management, these can be partly taken over by other partners or subcontracted to external experts. However, the legal responsibility remains with the lead partner. The size of the management team set in place may vary but it has to comprise as a minimum the following functions:

Management function	Responsibilities / tasks
Project manager (PM)	In charge of the overall coordination and organisation of the project implementation. The PM acts as driving force in the partnership ensuring the achievement of the project objectives within the given time, the internal information flow and knowledge management and the quality control of deliverables and outputs. In terms of reporting he/she is in charge of the preparation of the content parts of the six-monthly progress reports and their timely submission. The PM is also responsible for regular communication with the joint secretariat of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.
Finance manager (FM)	Responsible for the financial reporting, internal management of ERDF funds, project budget and national co-financing. The FM should work in close contact with the PM and the project partners in order to ensure a sound financial management of the project. Furthermore he/she has to monitor expenditure and payments referring to the lead partner, including the submission of documents to its national controller. Further, the FM is preparing the financial parts of the progress reports.
Communication manager (CM)	Responsible for developing and implementing the project communication strategy. Based on information provided in the application form, the CM will have to further detail communication objectives, approaches, key messages and activities in view of specific target audiences. The CM is also responsible for coordinating all communication activities across the project and for building all partners' capacity to communicate.

## Part C

### How to develop a good project

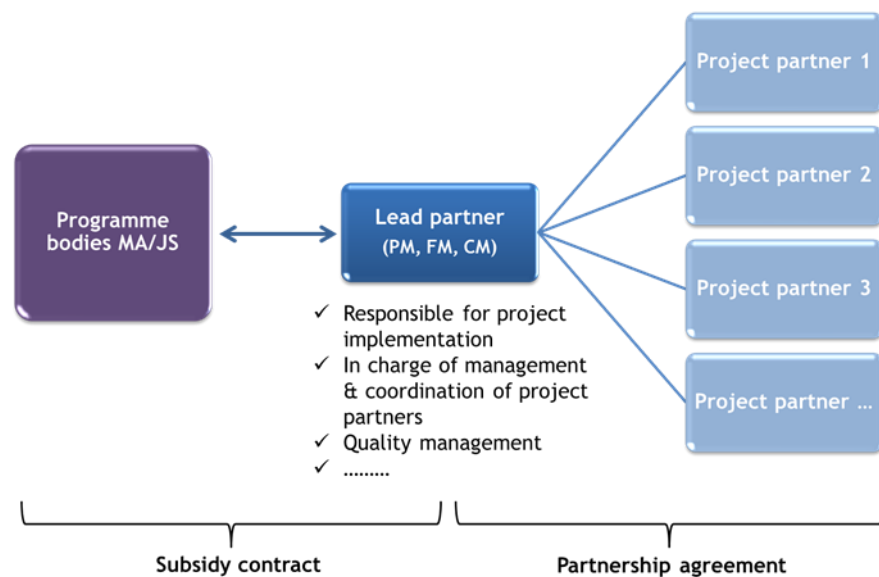
The importance (and work load) of the project management team is not to be underestimated.

The above functions should be ideally assigned to different staff members, which should work in close coordination and cooperation. The project management team is also responsible for sharing relevant information and knowledge within the partnership, thus contributing to building and/or ensuring the necessary capacity of all project partners.

At the partner level it is recommended to establish similar functions (project, finance and communication management) mirrored with a clear attribution of responsibilities within the partner's institution in order to allow a good information flow and coordination.

The following figure illustrates interrelations between the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, the lead partner and the project partners.

Figure 3 - Project management structure



## Decision making structures

Projects need to establish a clear decision making structure from the very beginning. This will allow to steer and monitor the project progress and, in case of unforeseen situations, to adjust the project implementation and/or management. Such structure usually comprises of a project steering committee (see also chapter A.2 of the implementation manual ) which holds meetings at least once per reporting period, i.e. every six months. In the steering committee each partner has to be represented and should actively take part in the decision making process.

Main tasks of the project steering committee are:

- ♦ Monitoring and validation of project contents: This includes verifying that the project implementation is in line with activities and outputs defined in the approved application form. Furthermore it means validating the quality of main project outputs and the progress towards achieving set objectives.
- ♦ Monitoring of project finances: This includes monitoring the project budget, budget flexibility and project spending.
- ♦ Review of the management performance and of the quality of progress reporting towards the programme bodies.
- ♦ If applicable, decisions on required project modifications (e.g. content, partnership, budget, duration) to be requested for approval to the programme bodies.

In case of problems, the project steering committee has to take action. It is important that rules of procedure and decision making are established and approved at the latest in the first meeting of the steering committee.

The steering committee is usually supported by the project management team to facilitate the decision making process.

## How to ensure high quality of project implementation?

### Internal quality management

Proper quality management is essential for ensuring successful project implementation (see also chapter A.2.3 of the implementation manual). Projects should thus foresee setting up quality management procedures, feedback loops and/or other structures already at the application stage.

To ensure a good implementation quality the project management team should:

- ◆ Be in regular contact with all project partners (through project management platforms, emails, phone, skype etc.) in order to have a clear overview of activities being implemented. Through this exchange it will be possible for the project manager to provide guidance and to ensure good quality of deliverables and outputs (in terms of contents, extent, timing, layout, etc.).
- ◆ Carefully plan the reporting process so that project partners provide the project management team with information in time. Foresee internal reporting templates and set up clear responsibilities as well as deadlines for getting information needed when filling in the six-monthly project progress reports.
- ◆ Regularly check the project performance, e.g. in terms of,
  - ⇒ Progress of implementation (activities, deliverables, outputs of all work packages)
  - ⇒ Finances

In addition, it is recommended that the lead partner checks the quality of information and of related supporting documents (deliverables, outputs, financial figures etc.) prepared by project partners before submitting these to the programme bodies. Such systematic quality control (“filtering”) has proven to be a very effective tool for a quick approval of progress reports and the reimbursement of related payment claims.

### Project evaluation

In addition to the above quality management provisions it is strongly recommended to foresee also project evaluation as a key management tool. There is, however, no standard approach as evaluation needs to be tailored to the actual needs of the project, notably in terms of project scope, timing (e.g. mid-term, final evaluation), type of partnership, strategic/operational evaluation etc.

A multitude of different evaluation approaches exists, which in the past have proven to be effective. Within a single project also different evaluation methods can be combined. Examples are:

- ◆ Evaluation of project implementation and/or achievements by external/independent experts (e.g. achievement of project specific objectives, related to specific elements of project implementation such as output or pilot actions, project communication, impact of project results on the identified target groups and stakeholders, etc.)
- ◆ Internal/external evaluation of project management (e.g. internal feedback loops from project partners on project coordination, internal communication and information flows, etc.) and/or formalised quality review of outputs (e.g. peer reviews)
- ◆ Scientific monitoring by expert or advisory boards (e.g. involving also associated partners for thematic assessment of outputs and results).

The status quo, main findings and results of both quality management processes and evaluations should be presented to the project steering committee in order to ensure that adequate decisions on necessary follow-up measures can be taken and implemented.

Please refer to chapter A.2.3 of the implementation manual for further guidance on evaluation principles, criteria and methods.

### **Mid-term project review**

Regardless of the above recommended but voluntary project evaluation, projects will have to undergo a compulsory mid-term review carried out by the programme in the framework of an ad-hoc meeting.

This review will take place at mid-term of project implementation (e.g. within a steering committee meeting). The review meeting has to be organised by the project in which representatives of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE joint secretariat will participate. Also the national contact points of the countries where project partners are located will be informed on the mid-term review meeting.

The mid-term review will focus on following aspects:

- ◆ Analysis of content-related and financial progress of the project
- ◆ Joint reflection on management issues
- ◆ Realistic forecast and recommendations for the remaining project period
- ◆ If applicable, identification of project deviations and delays as well as necessary project modifications (finance and activity changes).

Information on the outcome of the mid-term review will be presented to the CENTRAL EUROPE monitoring committee.

More details on the project mid-term review can be found in chapter B.5 of the implementation manual.

### **ATTENTION**

*No activity and budget changes will be allowed before the mid-term review. Based on the outcome of the review, especially in case of low project performances, the programme reserves the right to apply reductions to the project budget.*

*Activities referring to quality management have to be foreseen in the application form, notably in the management work package (see part D, chapter IV.2.4.2).*

## **VI. Setting up relevant project communication**

### **The project approach to communication**

Communication plays a strategic role in successful CENTRAL EUROPE projects. Communication helps projects to achieve the change they aim for with their thematic activities. When developing project communication objectives it is thus important to bear in mind that these objectives have to be intrinsically linked to the specific project objectives defined earlier on.

## Part C

### How to develop a good project

Basic questions to be asked when developing project communication are:

- ◆ **Objectives:** What can communication do in order to help reaching a specific project objective? Will it help to raise the awareness and/or to increase the knowledge of a broader audience about project activities? Or do projects have to attempt to change the attitude and/or behaviour of specific influential audiences that already know much about the project?
- ◆ **Approaches:** How is the project going to reach a communication objective? By informing people for example through storytelling to increase their awareness? By training people and/or by providing them with reliable facts to increase their knowledge? Or by ensuring transparent and open dialogue to change their attitude and behaviour? There are many different ways.
- ◆ **Activities:** What is the project exactly going to do in view of a chosen approach? Use social media to tell stories or rather publish fact sheets, infographics or other print products? Organise a public open day or a focused training seminar? Visit city administrations in a road show and make them familiar with policy papers and/or handbooks? As with the approaches, there is no limit to suitable activities.

To facilitate the development of relevant communication for upcoming Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects, communication objectives in the application form have been pre-defined as:

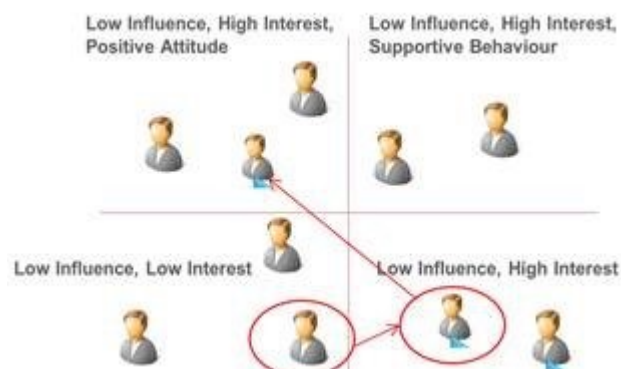
- ◆ Raising awareness
- ◆ Increasing knowledge
- ◆ Changing attitude
- ◆ Changing behaviour

**...of a specific audience!** To summarise in short: Communication is all about changing people's awareness, knowledge, attitude, and/or behaviour towards a specific project objective.

Therefore, when deciding on which communication objectives to choose in view of a specific project objective, projects will first have to identify their key audiences. In view of limited budgets it is important to prioritise audiences. In a second step they then have to decide, what kind of change they want to see in these people (e.g. higher awareness or changed behaviour). This can be done best by working with an "influence/interest grid" as illustrated in the examples below.

#### EXAMPLE 1: Communication objectives linked to audiences with "low influence":

*The public (often with low influence) shall be moved from the box „low influence, low interest“ into „low influence, high interest“. This basically means that their awareness needs to be raised. However, projects may then want to change the public's attitude or even behaviour, which means 'moving them up' even higher based on having made them aware/interested.*

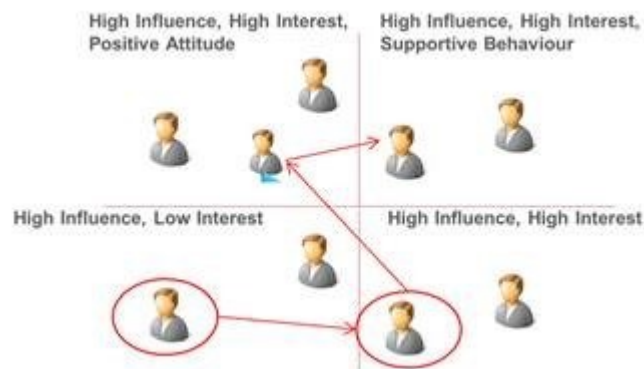


## Part C

### How to develop a good project

#### EXAMPLE 2: Communication objectives linked to audiences with “high influence”:

*Decision makers in regional authorities shall be moved from the box „high influence, low interest“ into „high influence, high interest“. For that their awareness needs to be raised first and their knowledge increased. In addition, projects might then want to change their attitude and/or behaviour based on having made them aware/interested.*



Once the project communication objectives and audiences are clearly defined, it becomes important to think about how a project will achieve its objective (“Which approach?”) and through what measures (“Which activities?”).

Communication objectives related to awareness and knowledge are tactically most often related to the approach of passing on information and messages (or often described as „dissemination“) through storytelling. However, there are more communication approaches than just dissemination and storytelling.

In view of communication objectives related to attitude and behaviour, communication is most often about involving and influencing stakeholders (open and transparent dialogue, building on previous dissemination which has ideally built awareness and knowledge).

More concrete information on devising relevant communication for a project is provided in part D, chapter IV.2.4.2 related to developing in the work plan (communication work package) and in chapter A.3 of the implementation manual.

## Harmonised programme and project communication: Effects on project communication

In view of start-up activities, please note that the **Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has joined the harmonised Interreg branding initiative** where several programmes decided to cooperate in order to increase awareness of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) as a valuable objective of EU cohesion policy.

Several programmes jointly decided to harmonise their own brands as well as project brands in the programming period 2014-2020. The well-known name “Interreg” will be re-introduced to this purpose while “European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)” will remain as the legal term used in official documents/regulations.

As a consequence, **all project logos will be aligned with the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme logo**. This shared branding will offer direct benefits including an increased recognisability on the ground, helping projects to reach shared objectives from attracting relevant stakeholders in the regions to capitalising on thematic results in a more cost-efficient, effective and visible way.



## Part C

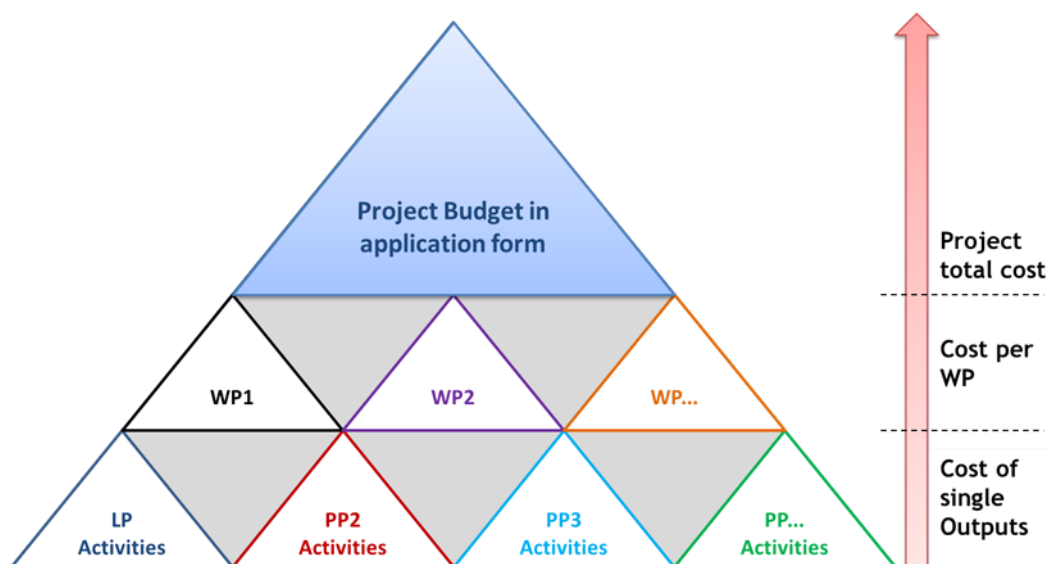
### How to develop

In line with wider EU cohesion policy goals for the current programming period, an aligned branding will also contribute to better spending and simplification. **Projects will be provided with their logo and with design templates** for publications (event invitations, project leaflets, etc.) and promotional materials, which can be easily adapted and implemented. However: specific logos could still be foreseen as an output of the communication work package for activities and products that are expected to sustain beyond the project duration. Please consult with the JS on this.

Similar to the approach in project branding, **project websites will be integrated and hosted on the programme website** as micro sites - with features according to needs expressed by projects and reachable at [www.interreg-central.eu/projectacronym](http://www.interreg-central.eu/projectacronym). Thus, for creating and maintaining the standard project website there will be no fixed costs since these services will be offered by the programme for free. However, as with logos above, specific websites can still be introduced by projects as an output of the communication work package for specific activities and products that are expected to sustain beyond the project duration or that deserve a more specific platform than the programme website (e.g. awareness campaigns, online IT tools, etc.). Social media platforms can also be handled in a flexible way by the projects. Please consult with the JS on this.

## VII. Designing a sound project budget

The budget of the project must be drafted following the real cost principle<sup>3</sup>, fully accomplishing the principles of adequacy of costs and sound financial management (i.e. economy, efficiency and effectiveness) as explained in part B chapter II.7.2). Accordingly, the project budget shall reflect the work plan, i.e. activities, deliverables and outputs planned by each project partner in order to achieve the intended results.



Tools used by applicants when designing the project budget must therefore allow to plan, **at the level of each partner**, the budget allocated to budget lines, work packages, reporting periods. A non-binding example of such tool (a MS-excel sheet developed by the programme) that could be used by applicants when designing their project budgets is available for download at [www.interreg-central.eu/cal](http://www.interreg-central.eu/cal)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Except for preparation costs as well as when simplified cost options are used for calculating costs under staff and office and administration budget lines. For further information please refer to Part B, chapters II.7.3 and II.7.4.

<sup>4</sup> The use of this tool is under the sole responsibility of the applicants and programme bodies do not bear any responsibility for possible non-functioning or misuse of this tool.



## Part C

### How to develop

In view of the allocation of budget to reporting periods, the following elements are to be taken into consideration:

- ◆ The reporting periods run on a six-monthly basis as from the project start date
- ◆ The budget allocated to each reporting period should be an estimation of the actual payments to be done in the respective reporting period. Therefore, the budget only partly reflects the activities taking place in a certain period. Indeed, if an activity is carried out close to the end of a reporting period, the related payment may take place in the following period and the costs should therefore be budgeted only in the following reporting period.

Spending forecasts will be subject to analysis during the assessment of applications in step 2. In particular an artificial distribution of total costs (e.g. evenly throughout the project duration and therefore not reflecting actual payments) will be evaluated negatively due to its negative effect on the decommitment calculations on programme level.

A first draft budget, prepared with the involvement of all partners, should already be made when developing the light application form within step 1 of the call, even if in step 1 only an indicative budget per project partner has to be included in the light application form. This is very important because only limited budget flexibility is allowed between step 1 and 2 of the call, i.e. **an application where the total budget is increased by more than 20 % will become non-eligible for funding** (for further details please refer to part D, chapter I).

**Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme**

# **Application Manual**

**Version 2 (September 2015)**

**Part D: How to apply with us**

# Part D

# How to apply with us

## Content

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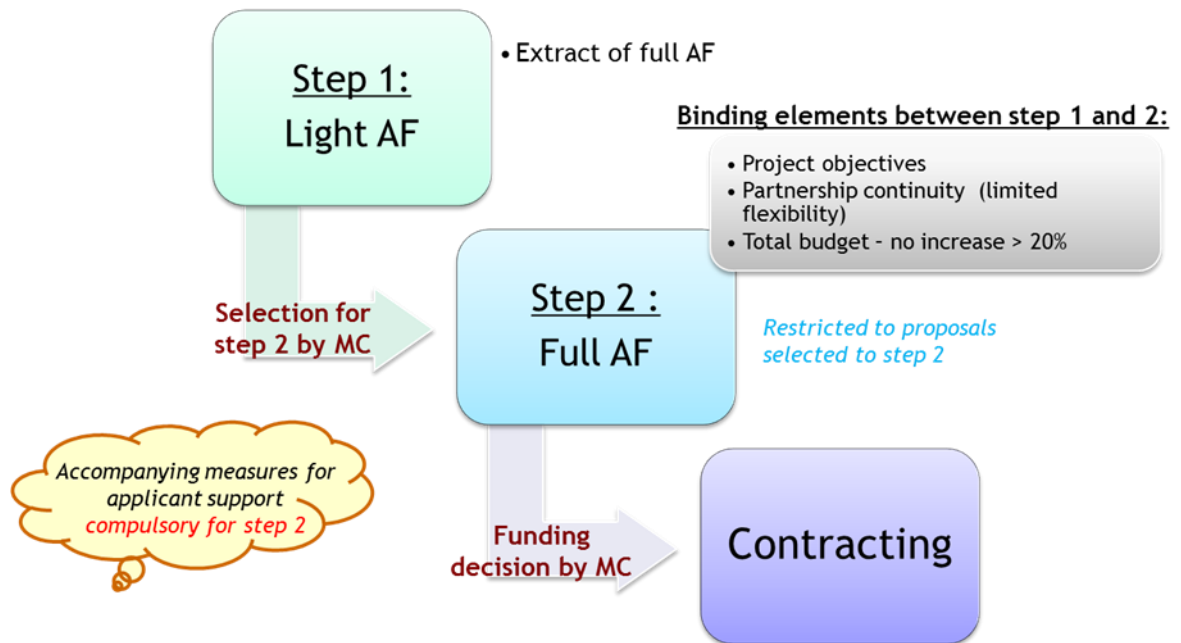
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## I. Application procedure

The application procedure for the first call for proposals is organised in two steps:

Figure 1: 2-step application procedure



### Step 1 – submission of the light application form

In the first step applicants have to submit a light application form (AF), which will provide an outline of the proposed project. The light application form goes beyond a mere expression of interest, which means that applicants have to present already in this step a comprehensive picture of the strategic project characteristics.

It is recommended to make use of individual consultations offered by the joint secretariat already during the step 1 (see part E of the manual).

The light AF is an extract of the full application form leaving out details on the work plan and budget. Its submission is to be accompanied by a scanned signed lead applicant declaration.

#### ATTENTION

*Applicants have to be aware, already during the preparation of the light application form, that continuity of main contents must be ensured between the two steps as the main principles of the light application form are binding and cannot be changed in step 2 (as listed below).*

Following the assessment of the step 1 applications, only applications selected according to quality requirements will be invited to submit a full proposal in the step 2.

## Step 2 – submission of the full application form

For the development of the full application form the following binding elements between step 1 and step 2 are to be considered:

- ◆ Project (main and specific) objectives cannot be changed
- ◆ Partnership continuity:
  - ⇒ Changes of lead applicants are not allowed following closure of step 1
  - ⇒ Changes of partners are limited following closure of step 1:
    - Partnerships of 3-5 project partners (based on step 1 application)-> max 1 partner change allowed
    - Partnerships of 6-10 project partners (based on step 1 application) -> max 2 partner changes allowed
    - For partnerships of more than 10 project partners (based on step 1) -> max 3 partner changes allowed
- ◆ Limited flexibility of budget changes: increases of more than 20 % (in relation to the total budget as indicated in step 1) are not allowed.

A partner change is understood as the withdrawal of a project partner followed either by the replacement through a new partner or without replacement. Legal successions<sup>1</sup> of institutions are not regarded as partner changes.

The extension of the partnership by adding project partners is possible without limitations (however budget limitations as indicated above should be kept in mind).

The submission of the full application form has to be accompanied by scanned supporting documents, notably declarations by the lead applicant and all project partners as well as other documents, if applicable (see details in chapter IV.2.6). Original (hard copy) documents are only to be provided during the contracting phase by projects selected for funding.

In order to support applicants in the preparation of the full application form in step 2, the joint secretariat will offer individual consultations and organise a lead applicant training. It is strongly recommended that applicants make use of both supporting measures (for more details see part E of the manual).

**The participation in at least one supporting measure (either consultation or training) during step 2 is mandatory.**

The structure and contents of the light and full application form are explained further in chapter IV which also provides detailed guidance on how to complete the application form.

<sup>1</sup> As also explained in chapter D.3.3 of the implementation manual, in this context legal succession is to be understood as any institutional change where, according to national law, the legal personality does not change and where all assets of the affected lead applicant or partner institution are taken over so that a deterioration of the financial capacity of the acquiring institution is not to be expected (i.e. in cases of universal succession).

## II. Application package

The application package for the first call can be downloaded from the programme website ([www.interreg-central.eu/call](http://www.interreg-central.eu/call)) and consists of the following documents:

- ◆ Call announcement for the first call;
  - ◆ Application manual organised in five parts and seven annexes;
  - ◆ Offline template of light application form (step 1) and full application form (step 2);
- In both steps of the call the project proposal (including required annexes) has to be **submitted by the lead applicant** solely through the online submission system (see chapter III). **Respective deadlines** are given in the call announcement (for step 1) and in the invitation letter (for step 2).

Only complete applications submitted within the call deadline and containing all required annexes will be considered as eligible.

The required accompanying documents are considered as annex to the application form (see chapter IV.2.6) and have to be uploaded as scanned documents (signed by the legal representative of the respective institution) in the online submission system (see administrative requirements - chapter V).

## III. Online submission system

In both steps applicants have to complete and submit the respective application forms electronically via the electronic monitoring system of the programme (eMS) which can be accessed under the following link <https://ems.interreg-central.eu/>.

In addition to guidance provided in this manual, the online application form also contains basic explanations of the various sections of the application form.

### III.1. Technical information and system requirements

The eMS is a web application which can be accessed with recent versions of most common browsers (e.g. Internet Explorer 11, Firefox 35, Chrome 39)<sup>2</sup>.

The functionality of the system follows the common standards of web applications for entering and submitting form data.

<sup>1</sup> When working with Internet Explorer it has to be ensured that the option “display intranet sites in compatibility view” is de-selected in the compatibility view settings of the browser (to access Internet Explorer preferences for compatibility view you can press Alt + T + B).

### ATTENTION

#### Remember to SAVE

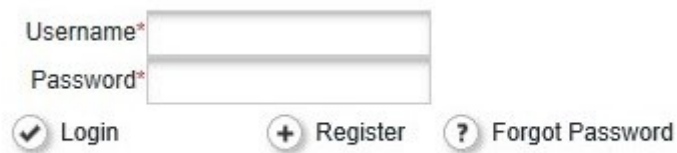
*The following important aspects have to be remembered when filling in the application form:*

- ◆ *The eMS does not provide any warning or request of confirmation before leaving a section of the application form or before logging out. Always remember to save the data before leaving a section in the application form (Save button on upper left corner), otherwise data will be lost!*
- ◆ *When filling in longer sections, please remember to regularly save data, in order to avoid losing data in case of interruptions of the internet connection or other technical issues.*
- ◆ *Do not use the “Enter” key in the forms as it may lead to unexpected results. Always use the commands provided by the eMS interface.*

## III.2. Registration

To use the online submission system, the **lead applicant must register** and create a set of credentials.

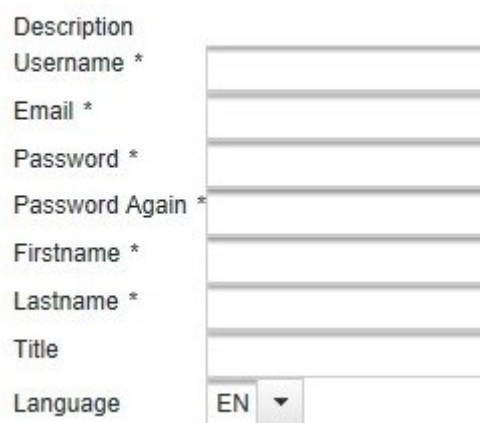
To register, go to <https://ems.interreg-central.eu/> and click on “Register”. The person registering should be preferably the contact person of the lead applicant institution. Please note that automatically generated emails (e.g. on successful submission) will be sent to this email address only.



A login and registration interface. It features two input fields: 'Username\*' and 'Password\*'. Below these fields are three buttons: 'Login' (with a checkmark icon), 'Register' (with a plus icon), and 'Forgot Password' (with a question mark icon).

In the registration form, fill in the following information:

### Registration



A registration form with the following fields: 'Description', 'Username \*', 'Email \*', 'Password \*', 'Password Again \*', 'Firstname \*', 'Lastname \*', 'Title', and 'Language'. The 'Language' field is a dropdown menu currently showing 'EN'.

## Part D How to apply with us

The person creating the application must represent (or be delegated by) the lead applicant institution who can then give user rights to other registered users and, after completing the filling in of the application form, will finally submit it to the programme bodies.

- ◆ Username: will be used to log in and submit the applications. It can be freely chosen by the lead applicant's contact person.
- ◆ Email: the email address of the applicant.
- ◆ Password: password used to access the system (in case the password is forgotten, please contact the helpdesk during office hours to get a new password).
- ◆ First name / Last name / Title: Personal information of the lead applicant's contact person.
- ◆ Language: English is pre-defined language, programme's official language). It cannot be changed.

A confirmation email will be sent to the email address provided. Follow the instructions in the message to confirm the registration.

Only after confirmation, the lead applicant will be able to log in to the online submission system and create a new application.

### III.3. Filling in and submitting the application form

The lead applicant can give editing rights to some sections of the application form to other users (namely the project partners). These have to be registered in the system before and provide the lead applicant with their username.

The lead applicant can then add new users in the "User Management" section (see screenshot of project menu below). Users can be granted either read-only rights ("add for reading"), or edit and add data rights ("add for modification").

The screenshot displays the 'Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE' application form interface. At the top, there's a 'show more' button and a 'Welcome' message. The navigation bar includes sections: A - Project overview (active), B - Partner, C - Project Description, D - Workplan, E/F - Partner budget, and G - Attachments. The sidebar on the left lists actions: Submit Saved Project, Save As Pdf File, User Management, Attachment Upload, Exit, Help, and Delete Project. The main content area, titled 'User Project Mapping', features two input fields: 'New User' and 'Assigned User'. Below these fields are three buttons: '+ Add For Reading', '+ Add For Modification', and '- Remove'.

The user accounts created to draft and submit the application will be available until the end of step 2 of the call.

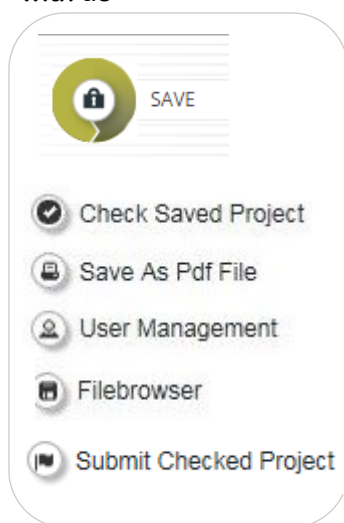
In case the project is selected for funding, a new set of credentials will be created for every project partner.

To a certain extent, it is possible for different users to **work in parallel (at the same time)** on the same application form. When working in parallel, users have to make sure though that they are not working in the same section or sub-section (in case that the section is divided).



## Part D

### How to apply with us



Please note that only the user who initially created the application form (i.e. the lead applicant) can submit the application form (both for step 1 and 2 of the call). The application form which has been successfully submitted is final and cannot be changed anymore (it will only appear in read only mode in the system).

Please note that you can create a pdf file of the application form at any time of its development by pressing the “Save As Pdf File” button (see also screenshot of project menu above). You will find the created pdf file(s) in the general menu in the section “Filebrowser” (the saving of the pdf document in the filebrowser might take several minutes).

### Automatic checks of the application form

Once the application form is at an advanced stage, but well before its final submission, it is recommended to perform the automatic checks on the correctness of data entered into the application form.

This check is done by pressing the “Check Saved Project” button in the menu on the left. The system then performs several automatic checks of the formal requirements (e.g. completeness of information, minimum number of partners, etc.). If all automatic checks are successfully passed, the message “Success” will be displayed. In case of automatic checks showing deficiencies, the system indicates these in an error message on top of the page and the partnership can amend the application form accordingly.

### Submission of the application form

Before the final submission of the application form it is recommended to save the final version of the application form as pdf file.

When submitting the final application form by pressing the “Submit Saved Project” button, the system performs once more the same automatic checks described above. Only if all automatic checks are successfully passed, the application form will be officially submitted. In case of automatic checks showing deficiencies, the system indicates these in an error message and the partnership can amend the application form accordingly.

## III.4. Helpdesk and technical support

The eMS has a built-in help function which provides both online help and instructions for every section of the application form. For more information you can refer to the FAQs published on the website of the programme.

For any IT related problems you might experience with the online submission system, please contact the helpdesk at [helpdesk@interreg-central.eu](mailto:helpdesk@interreg-central.eu) or contact the joint secretariat under +43 1 89 08 088-2405 during office hours.

## IV. Drafting of application form

The application form has to be completed in **English** as this is the working language of the programme. In the following chapters the structure and content of the application form is presented. Please note that only some sections are required to be filled in step 1 of the application procedure. Details on the two-step application procedure are provided in chapter I.

### IV.1. Structure of the application form - overview

The application form is structured in seven sections and several sub-sections out of which only some have to be filled in in step 1 of the call, as presented below:

Light application form (Step 1)		Full application form (Step 2)	
Section	Headers (Sub sections)	Section	Headers (Sub sections)
A	<b>Project overview</b>	A	<b>Project overview</b>
	A.1 Project identification		A.1 Project identification
	A.2 Project summary		A.2 Project summary
	Indicative project budget (total per partner - table only in step 1)		A.3 Project budget summary - breakdown per partner
B	<b>Partners</b>	B	<b>Partners</b>
	B.1 Lead partner/project partners		B.1 Lead partner/project partners
C	<b>Project description</b>	C	<b>Project description</b>
	C.1 Project relevance		C.1 Project relevance
	C.2 Project focus		C.2 Project focus
D	<b>Work plan</b>		C.3 Project context
	D.1 Summary description of thematic work packages		C.4 Horizontal principles and additional indicators
	D.4 Periods	D	<b>Work plan (including timeline)</b>
E/F	<b>Budget</b>		D.1 Work package description
	Indicative project budget per partner (table only in step 1)		D.2 Target groups
G	<b>Annexes</b>	E/F	<b>Budget</b>
	Lead applicant declaration		E Partner budget
		G	F Project budget overview
			<b>Annexes</b>
			Lead applicant declaration
			Partner declarations
			Result indicator sheet
			Supporting documents for private lead ap- plicants (if applicable )

Please note that in the online application form some fields in various (sub-) sections will be automatically filled in (grey cells) by the system by transferring data inserted in other sections of the application form or which are automatically calculated.

## IV.2. Contents of the application form (light and full)

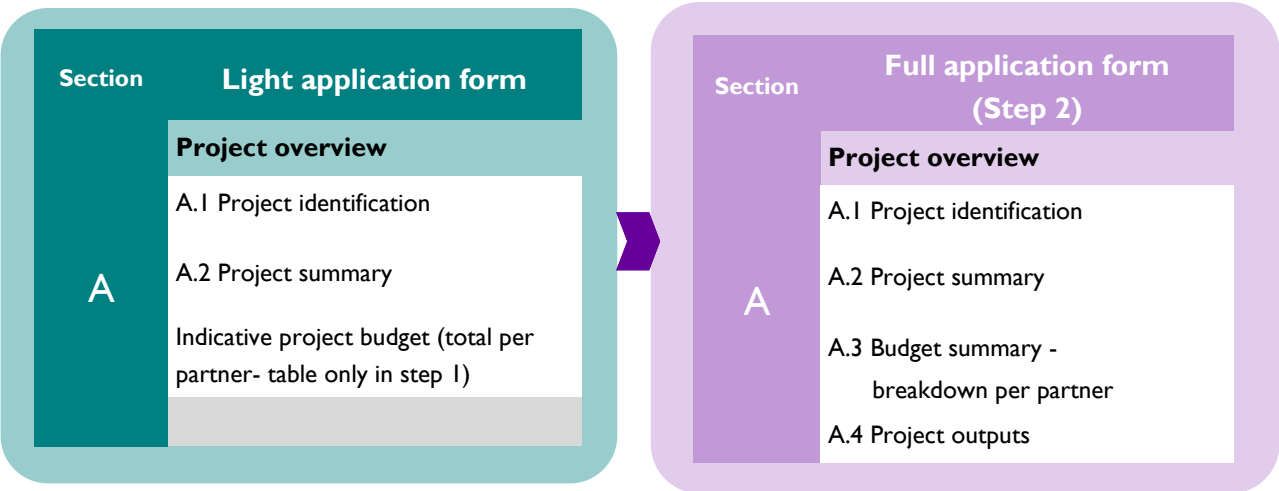
In the application form all essential information about the project must be presented.

The application form will be the basis for the quality assessment and subsequently the project selection (step 1: pre-selection, step 2: funding decision) by the programme monitoring committee (see chapter V).

In case the project will be selected for funding, the approved full application form will become part of the subsidy contract and will be used as a tool for monitoring the project implementation.

In the following chapters the main contents required for each section of the application form are presented. At the beginning of each section it is highlighted which information has to be filled in in step 1 (light AF) and which additional information is to be complemented during step 2 of the application process (full AF). In this respect, further explanations are given within each of the sections and sub-sections.

### IV.2.1. Section A – Project overview



It is recommended to check whether the intended acronym already exists in order to avoid duplication of names with other projects/initiatives. Moreover, special attention should be paid to the existing copyrights for the selected acronym linked to brands, products, trademarks, etc .

Section A contains general information about the project.

The sub-section A.1 includes the project identification, such as project title, acronym, number, duration and selection of programme priority axis and specific objective. **When defining the project duration in eMS, please ensure that the project starts on the first day of the starting month and ends with the last day of the closing month.**

In sub-section A.2 a brief summary description of the project shall be written in the style of a press release capturing the main features of the project.

#### ATTENTION

- ◆ *The application form can only target one priority axis and one programme specific objective of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme (contributions to other priorities and specific objectives are however possible).*
- ◆ *Please keep the project title and acronym short and straightforward since, if selected for funding, this will be the official name of the project during the whole implementation period.*

## Part D How to apply with us

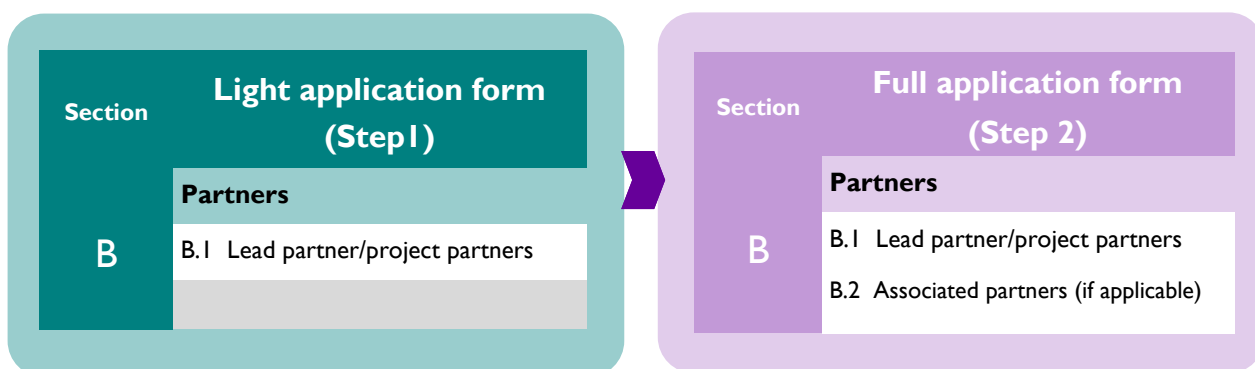
An overview table on the indicative project budget (total per partner) is also displayed in this section, automatically filled in with data entered in the budget section of the application form (see section E/F Budget).

Step 2:

In the full AF a more detailed budget table is displayed summarising the budget information as filled in in the budget section E of the full application form.

In addition, at the end of the summary section an overview table is automatically generated listing the project outputs quantification as defined in the work plan linking them to the programme specific output indicators.

### IV.2.2. Section B – Project partners



This section contains information on the partnership (lead partner, project partners). Please also note that information provided in this section will support the assessment of state aid relevance of project activities carried out in step 2 of the call. For further information on state aid please refer to part B, chapter II.7.7)

An economic activity is defined as “offering goods or services on a given market”. It has to be kept in mind that not only profit making companies perform economic activities and that very often public bodies or non profit organisations do also perform economic activities. For example, research organisations (including public universities and private research institutes) can carry out both economic and non economic activities. Non economic activities of research organisations include their primary activities such as public education and independent research and development. Economic activities of research organisations include, for example, contract research or renting of laboratory facilities for a fee.

#### a. Competences

In this section information is to be provided with regard to specific competences of each organisation participating in the project regarding the following aspects:

- ◆ Description of the main field(s) of interest of the organisation in its daily business.
- ◆ Information on economic activities carried out by the organisation in its daily business, specifying which type of activities in which market.
- ◆ Information on the organisation’s thematic competences and experiences relevant for the project.

#### b. Role in the project

In this section information is to be provided with regard to the role of each organisation participating in the project regarding the following aspects:

- ◆ Description of the role and responsibility in the project (e.g. work package leader, responsible for implementation of a specific pilot action or pilot investment etc.)
- ◆ Description of the benefit which the organisation will gain from participating in the project (e.g. new knowledge and data, practical experience with new methods etc.)

- ◆ Information on economic activities performed by the organisation within the project or as a consequence of its implementation. This might include for example selling of the new products developed within the project following the knowledge acquired and/or the availability of a project output (e.g. a feasibility study).

c. EU/international projects experience

In this section information about the previous experience of each organisation in EU/ international projects (e.g. Interreg, EU Research Framework Programme/HORIZON 2020, Intelligent Energy Europe, LIFE etc.), if any, is to be provided regarding the following aspects:

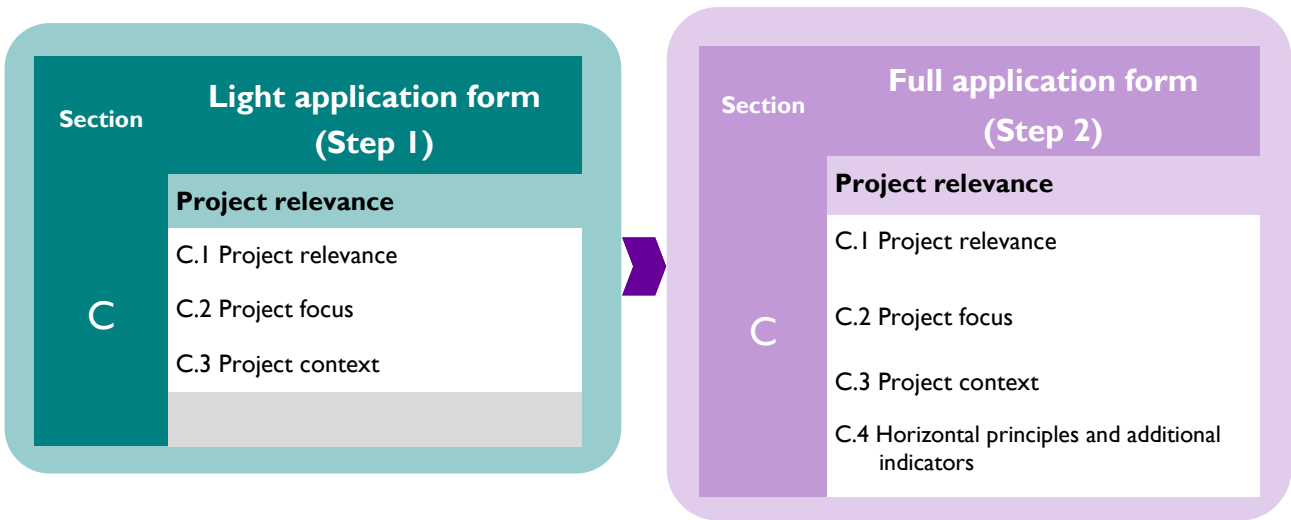
- ◆ Experience in management/coordination of previous EU/international projects
- ◆ Participation and role in previous EU/international projects

Step 2:

In the full AF, if applicable, also associated partners can be listed (see part B chapter II.1.4). Information provided in step 1 can be further updated and adapted in the full application form to be submitted in step 2.

The partner information is summarised into the partner list which is automatically generated by the online system.

IV.2.3. Section C – Project description



In section C of the application form applicants have to provide information on how well the project contributes to the objectives of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

In particular, this section includes the description of the key characteristics and strategic elements of the project, notably information on its relevance, focus and context.

In order to answer these questions, it is important that applicants read part B, chapter I of the application manual to be able to understand the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE key principles which are a pre-condition for a project to be funded by the programme.

### IV.2.3.1. Project relevance (C.1)

In relation to the project relevance applicants have to provide information on the following project characteristics:

#### Territorial challenges

The applicants should explain the relevance of the project in **relation to the territorial challenges and/or common assets of the regions participating** in the programme. This should reflect the initial situation (i.e. before project implementation) and clearly describe why the project is considered as necessary for the involved regions/countries.

#### Project approach and innovativeness

The description should highlight the project`s approach for addressing common challenges and/or assets identified by the partnership. It should describe how the project will be structured and the methods that will be applied. In addition, please describe to which extent new or innovative solutions (e.g. process, goal and content oriented innovation) will be developed and/or implemented. In this respect, it should be highlighted how the planned solutions and expected results go beyond the state of the art in the sector and/or the participating regions.

#### Transnational cooperation

The applicant should demonstrate the need for transnational cooperation, i.e. why the project objectives cannot be reached acting only on a national/regional/local level, as well as the added value for the project partners and target groups gained through the transnational cooperation.

More detailed information on the required transnational and territorial dimension of projects to be supported can be found in part B, chapter I.2.

#### Step 2:

In the full AF the partnership should specify the level of **intensity of cooperation** according to the following cooperation criteria:

- ◆ **Joint development (compulsory)** - i.e. partners have to be involved integrating their ideas, priorities and actions in the project development process.
- ◆ **Joint implementation (compulsory)** - i.e. project activities must be carried out by the partners in a cooperative way ensuring clear content-based links and be coordinated by the lead partner.
- ◆ **Joint staffing** - i.e. the project should not duplicate functions within the partnership. In particular, project management functions should be carried out at project level.
- ◆ **Joint financing (compulsory)** - i.e. the joint project budget shall be organised according to the activities carried out by each project partner. The lead partner is responsible for the administration and reporting towards the programme bodies as well as the distribution of the funds to the partners.

## IV.2.3.2 Project focus (C.2)

The sub-section “project focus” presents the **intervention logic** of the project which is composed of the following elements:

- ◆ Project main objective
- ◆ Expected project results
- ◆ Project specific objectives

In this sub-section the applicant has to define the project objectives (main objective and specific objectives) as well as the expected project results.

Detailed guidance for setting up the project intervention logic is provided below. Please refer also to part B chapter I.1 where the required linkage between the programme and project intervention logic is explained as well as to part C, chapter III describing the principles of the project intervention logic).

### Step 2:

In the full AF, the planned main project outputs forming part of the project intervention logic (see also explanations below on how to build the project intervention logic) have to be defined within the respective work packages (see section D of the application form on the work plan).

### How to build the project intervention logic?

The most important step in developing the project proposal right from the beginning, is to clearly define the intervention logic, notably the project objective(s) and expected results. These should be as specific as possible and clearly expressing what kind of changes the project intends to bring about in relation to the initial situation.

The project intervention logic has to be coherent and shall provide the necessary information on how the project contributes to the selected programme priority axis, in particular in relation to the targeted programme specific objective and its expected result.

The project intervention logic should be built according to the process displayed in figure 2, while definitions of the main terms used for the intervention logic are provided in table 1.

Figure 2: Building the project intervention logic

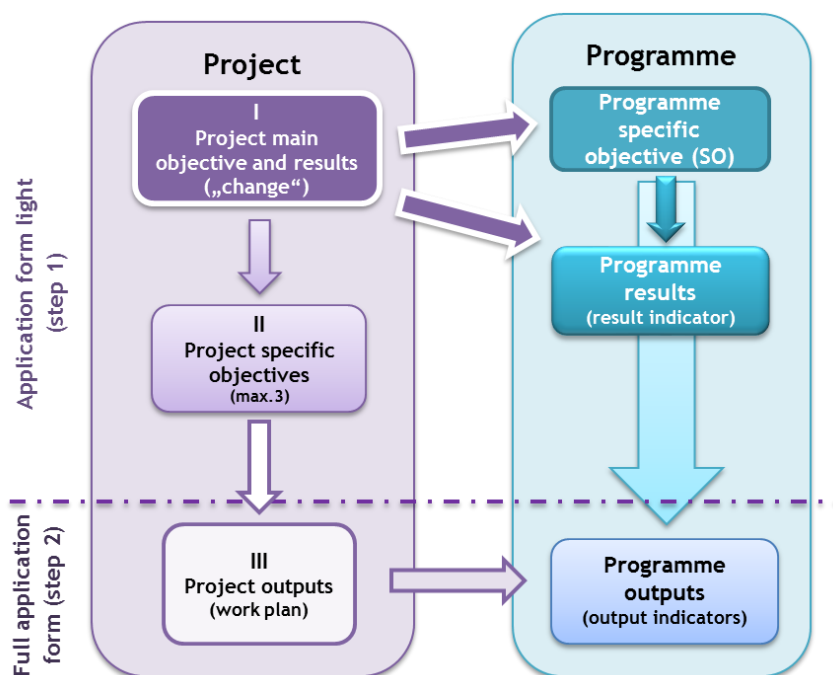


Table 1 - Project intervention logic glossary

Term	Definition
Project main objective	Provides the overall context for what the project aims to achieve. It describes the <u>long-term objective</u> the project seeks to support and relates to the strategic aspects of the project. It has to be in line with a programme specific objective and result.
Project specific objective	Describes the <u>immediate objective</u> sought by the project, which can be realistically <u>achieved within the project lifetime</u> through the development of the project outputs. It should be verifiable at the end of a project whether the specific objective was achieved or not. Each project specific objective has to clearly contribute to the project main objective.
Project result	Describes the <u>advantage</u> of carrying out the project and the <u>change</u> compared to the initial situation. Results are derived from the outputs achieved by the project. They have to be coherent with project objectives and contribute to the programme results.
Project output	Is the outcome <u>obtained following the implementation of project activities paid with project funds</u> (i.e. strategy/action plan, tool, pilot action, training etc.). Each output should be captured by a programme output indicator and should directly contribute to the achievement of the project result.

### I) Setting of project main objective and results

- ◆ Define the project main objective which outlines the “strategic” focus of the project and its expected results. Results should indicate the changes the project will achieve following its implementation (“theory of change”).
- ◆ Select a programme specific objective to which the project contributes within the chosen priority axis. It has to be ensured that the project main objective is fully consistent with the selected specific objective.
- ◆ Explain the linkage between the envisaged project results and the programme result referring to the chosen specific objective. The explanation should give evidence of how and to which extent the project will contribute to the programme result indicator linked to the chosen specific objective. Please note that the contribution to the result indicator shall relate *not only to project partners, but also to the target groups of the project considering also the transferability of project results to other territories facing similar challenges*.



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Define the project main and specific objectives very carefully, since they cannot be changed in step 2 of the call.

### II) Defining project specific objectives

- ◆ The project should define up to three specific objectives describing what the project aims to achieve within its lifetime. Project specific objectives should be as concrete as possible and directly address the problems/challenges as described within the sub-section C.1 of the application form: Project relevance. When setting the project specific objectives, it has to be considered that the partnership should have the necessary capacity to directly influence their achievement. The reaching of objectives has to be verifiable during project implementation.
- ◆ Each of the set project specific objectives has to clearly contribute to the project main objective and the expected project results. This will ensure the internal coherence of the project intervention logic.

### Step 2:

### III) Defining project outputs

Project outputs have to be defined in the work plan (see also section D of the application form as well as explanations in chapter IV.2.4) and can be characterised as follows:

- ◆ Outputs are the direct outcomes of the project and have to directly contribute to the achievement of the project objectives and results.
- ◆ Project outputs should follow the typology of outputs (see chapter IV.2.4 related to the description of thematic work packages) as applied by the Interreg CENTRAL EU-ROPE Programme (i.e. strategies/action plans, tools, pilot actions, trainings, innovation networks - applicable only for specific objective 1.1 ) and be captured by programme output indicators. Detailed explanations on the output typology and the respective output indicators including examples of outputs per priority axis and specific objectives are explained in a dedicated guidance document (annex III).
- ◆ Within investment specifications the defined outputs/investments have to be linked to the category "investment" as included in the list of output indicators (see chapter IV.2.4.2 ).

At the end of the summary section in the full application form is an automatically generated overview table listing the project outputs quantification as defined in the work plan and linking them to the programme specific output indicators.

### Sustainability and transferability of outputs and results

Project sustainability refers to continuation or follow up of the activities implemented within the project including valorisation of the results and outcomes.

In the light application form (step 1) applicants have to provide general information on the sustainability and transferability of the foreseen outputs and results at project level.

Applicants have to explain how sustainability is anchored in the project design to make the project viable in the longer term.

In particular, the applicant should explain how sustainability will be secured after completion of the project which may include aspects of follow-up activities, ownership etc. (see also explanations provided in part B chapter I.4).

A distinction between the following three dimensions of sustainability can be made:

- ◆ **Financial sustainability** financing of follow up activities and investments, leverage of funds, resources for covering future operating and maintenance costs, etc.
- ◆ **Institutional sustainability** "ownership" of project outputs - which structures will allow, and how, the results of the project to continue to be in place after the project end?
- ◆ **Political sustainability** what structural impact will the project have? - e.g. will it lead to improved policies, legislation, plans, codes of conduct, methods, etc.?

**Transferability** is the potential to apply the project outputs or results in other regions or different contexts. The knowledge created in the project should be easily applicable, transferable and possible to use in other organisations/regions/countries outside of the defined partnership. Such transfer of knowledge, outputs and results should allow for efficiently addressing existing disparities between regions.

### Step 2:

Please note that in the full application form (step 2) more detailed information on sustainability and transferability is required at work package level which has to be specified for the main project outputs within the thematic work packages ( section D.1 work package description of the application form - see chapter IV.2.4).

### IV.2.3.3. Project context (C.3)

In this section the applicant should describe how the project contributes to the relevant existing policy framework (at EU, national, regional levels) within the thematic scope of the project and for each of the regions participating in the project:

- ◆ the EU policy framework given by the Europe 2020 strategy, EU sectoral policies for the thematic scope of the project, European Territorial Agenda etc.
- ◆ national, regional or local policies (referring only to the relevant governance level applicable for the project scope and territories)

### Step 2:

If applicable, in the full application form (step 2) also possible contributions of the project to the following macro-regional strategies<sup>3</sup> covering the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme area should be described:

- ◆ EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)
- ◆ EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)
- ◆ EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
- ◆ EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

Please remember that the programme prepared comprehensive thematic studies summarising the results of the CENTRAL EUROPE 2007 2013 projects (listed in part A, chapter V and available on the programme website). This will help in building a project based on available knowledge and existing achievements.

The description should clearly specify the linkage with the respective macro-regional strategy and explain how the project will contribute to the objectives of the macro-regional strategy.

Further, synergies with other national or European projects and initiatives (past, on-going or planned) should be described. It should be highlighted if the project builds on past efforts taking advantage of existing knowledge in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

In particular, it should be indicated if the application is linked to any other proposal currently under preparation within other EU funds, also specifying the concerned EU programmes (e.g. other Interreg programmes, Horizon 2020, COSME, LIFE, national or regional programmes supported by ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD, EMF, etc.).

In addition, it should be explained how the project builds on available knowledge. Applicants should describe relevant experiences or lessons-learned from previous projects and how gained knowledge will be used. If applicable, linkages to previous CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013 and other EU projects should be highlighted. For further information please see also part C chapter II.

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/index.cfm/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/)

#### IV.2.3.4. Horizontal principles and additional indicators (C.4)

This entire section C.4 is only applicable for the full application form (step 2).

##### Horizontal principles

Applicants have to indicate how the project will contribute to the following horizontal principles of the programme, by characterising the type of possible effects:

- ◆ Environment
- ◆ Sustainable development
- ◆ Equal opportunities and non-discrimination
- ◆ Gender equality

In the application form a self-assessment on the respect of the above principles has to be performed. In case of possible negative effects, adequate mitigation measures have to be designed already in the application stage in order to avoid occurrence of such negative effects. For example, if a project foresees the promotion of river and sea transport, specific attention should be placed on the ecological status of the water body and its hydro morphology.

For more detailed information on horizontal principles please refer to part B chapter I.6.

##### Additional indicators (not part of the online application form – see attention box below)

The programme has defined the following thematic result indicators which aim at capturing the result and implementation-oriented project effects:

- ◆ Number of institutions adopting new and/or improved strategies and action plans
- ◆ Number of institutions applying new and/or improved tools and services
- ◆ Amount of funds leveraged based on project achievements
- ◆ Number of jobs created (FTE) based on project achievements
- ◆ Number of trained persons

Applicants have to choose from the thematic result indicators listed above those of relevance for the project considering its scope and the planned achievements. Applicants have also to quantify the respective targets. Please note that in case the project will be funded, the respective progress for the chosen indicators will have to be reported during project implementation.

In addition, projects have to report on the following communication result indicators which aim at capturing the project's communication effects:

- ◆ Visits to the project website
- ◆ Participants at project events
- ◆ Event participants satisfied with information provided
- ◆ Joint communication activities implemented with external stakeholders

In the application form targets for all communication result indicators have to be set, their progress will have to be reported during project implementation.

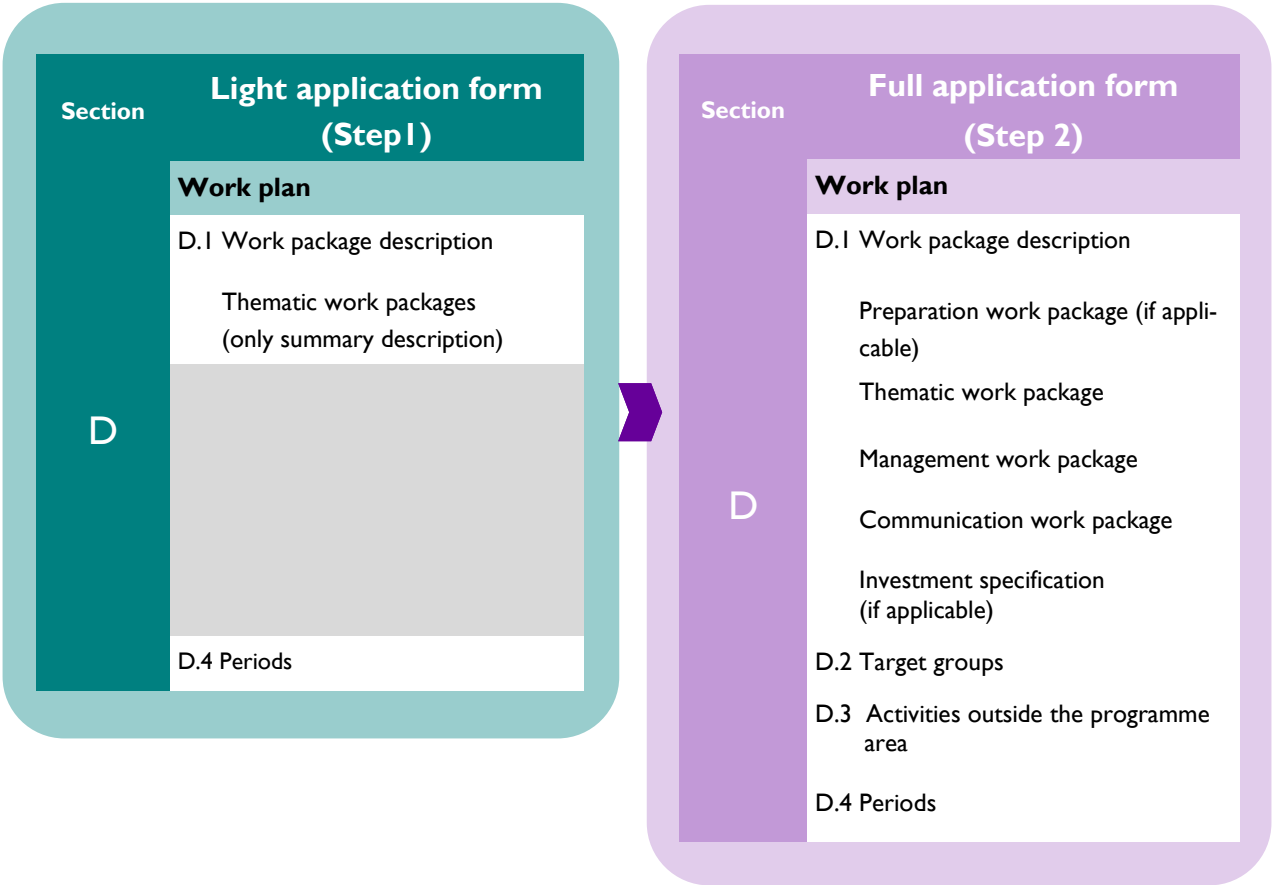
Additional guidance on the above mentioned indicators and their definitions in order to ensure a common understanding of their scope and meaning is provided in annex III of the manual.

ATTENTION

Information on additional indicators cannot be entered in the online application form but it has to be provided in a separate annex (Result indicators sheet) to be enclosed to the full application form (see chapter IV.2.6).

IV.2.4. Section D – Work plan

IV.2.4.1. Introduction to the work plan



The project work plan describes the activities which will be performed by the project in order to deliver the outputs necessary for achieving the project specific objectives. The work plan is composed of a set of work packages, part of them to be defined by the applicants.

The programme foresees three different types of work packages and a specification of investments (see table below).

In the light application form (step 1) only basic information on the thematic work packages (see chapter IV.2.4.2) has to be provided. Content-related activities linked to the achievement of the project objectives and results should be described.

Work package descriptions dedicated to management and communication as well as investment specifications are only to be provided in step 2 of the call.

Table 2 - Types of work packages (WP)

WP type	Mandatory	Content	Light AF/Full AF
Preparation	No	Related to the request of a lump sum for preparation and contracting costs (as explained in chapter IV.2.4.2 and part B, chapter II.7.4)	Only applicable for the full application form (step 2)
Thematic	YES	Content-related activities linked to the achievement of the project objectives and results WP title to be defined by the partnership reflecting the intended result of the WP. <i>From one to max. four thematic work packages per project</i>	Light application form (step 1): only summary description needed
Management	YES	Project management and coordination activities <i>One management WP per project</i>	Only applicable for the full application form (step 2)
Communication	YES	Communication, knowledge management and dissemination activities linked to the project specific objectives <i>One communication WP per project</i>	Only applicable for the full application form (step 2)
Investment specification	Only for investments above EUR 15.000	Applicable only if the project foresees investment(s). <i>Each investment is to be described by a separate investment specification. Such specification is to be filled-in only if the total value of the concerned investment exceeds EUR 15.000 of total costs</i> Investment title is to be defined by the partnership reflecting its focus.	Only applicable for the full application form (step 2)

At the beginning of the work plan section, a **work package overview** list is displayed which is automatically filled-in according to information included in the subsequent work packages description .

### Step 2:

In the full application form also the overall project time line in a Gantt chart is displayed. The chart is automatically generated on the basis of information inserted in the work plan and it visualises the timing of all work packages and project outputs, activities and deliverables.

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In general, a work package is characterised by the following:

- ◆ Work package objective
- ◆ Clear roles and responsibilities of project partners
- ◆ Composed by a number of activities (recommended range of not more than 4-6 activities per work package)
- ◆ Must produce at least one output (only applicable to thematic work packages)
- ◆ Defined by a start and end date
- ◆ Logical linkage with other work packages

The following figure illustrates the relationship between project activities, outputs and deliverables (applicable to thematic work packages).

Figure 3:  
Relationship between project activities,  
outputs and deliverables (applicable to  
thematic work packages)

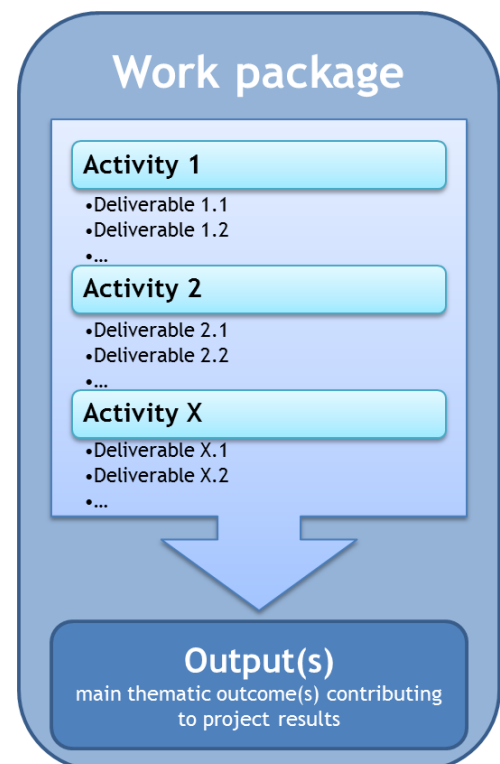


Table 3 - Definitions of outputs, activities and deliverables

Term	Definition
Project outputs	Are the outcomes <b>obtained following the implementation of project activities paid with project funds</b> (i.e. strategy/action plan, tool, pilot action, training etc.). Each output should be captured by a programme output indicator and should directly contribute to the achievement of the project result. Each thematic work package must foresee at least one output. See also further explanations on output types below.
Project activities	Each work package (except for WP preparation and investment specification) is divided into <b>activities</b> (ideally not more than 4-6 activities per work package). Activities have to lead to the development of one or more project outputs. For each activity the start and the end month as well as the indicative cost must be specified. The sum of the indicative budgets of the single project activities within a work package should be equal to the work package budget .
Project deliverables	Each activity should include one or more <b>deliverables</b> (e.g. analysis report, feasibility study etc.) that contribute to the achievement of project outputs. All small steps of a single activity, such as stakeholder meeting documentations, working groups etc., do not need to be listed as separate deliverables, but should be aggregated into one deliverable, e.g. a qualitative report describing the stakeholder involvement.

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In addition, a document summarising the main outcome (e.g. strategy document, documentation of pilot action etc.) has to be provided also for each output.

### EXAMPLE

*The output of a thematic work package will be action plans for the reduction of air pollution in functional urban areas for four cities.*

*In order to achieve this output, several activities with the following deliverables are foreseen, such as:*

**Activity 1:** *Analysis of the current air quality situation and collection of best practices*

⇒ *Deliverable 1.1 : Study on air quality for the participating four cities*

**Activity 2:** *Analysis of air quality policy framework*

⇒ *Deliverable 2.1: Transnational report on policy framework*

**Activity 3:** *Stakeholder involvement*

⇒ *Deliverable 3.1: Concept on how to involve relevant stakeholders in the four cities*

⇒ *Deliverable 3.2: Summary report on stakeholder involvement*

**Activity 4:** *Elaboration of transnational action plan*

⇒ *Deliverable 4.1: Transnational action plan concept*

**Activity 5:** *Adaptation of the transnational action plan to the local context*

⇒ *Deliverable 5.1: Action plan for city A*

⇒ *Deliverable 5.2: Action plan for city B*

⇒ *Deliverable 5.3: Action plan for city C*

⇒ *Deliverable 5.4: Action plan for city D*

**Output: Four action plans developed** *for four central European cities (to be documented as one report summarising the work package activities and their outcomes related to the action plan development)*

*Output indicator: "Number of strategies and action plans for the improvement of environmental quality in functional urban areas developed and/or implemented"*

*Indicator quantification/target: 4*

## IV.2.4.2. Work package description (D.1)

### Work package type: Thematic work package

Thematic work packages describe the **core "thematic" activities** carried out within the project and the related outputs. Thematic work packages must be limited to a **maximum of four**.

The work package title should reflect the strategic transnational focus and the intended results of the work package rather than the planned activities.

In the light application form (step 1) only a summary of the thematic work packages is required. This should include:

- ◆ The main objective(s) of the work package and a summary description of its contents (including activities and foreseen outputs);
- ◆ A summary description of how partners will be involved;

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- ◆ An indicative budget for the work package (in percent of the total project budget);
- ◆ If applicable, information whether one or more investments linked to the respective thematic work package is/are foreseen (please note that no separate investment specification is required in step 1).

The guidance below shows how to set up a work package for the full application form (step 2). Applicants are strongly recommended to make themselves familiar with this already during step 1 of the call.

### Step 2:

In the full application form the basic work package description of the light application form has to be further elaborated by describing also the planned activities as well as the outputs and deliverables foreseen which will contribute to reaching the project objectives and results. If required, changes to the preliminary work package structure as defined in the light application form (step 1) are possible. It is to be kept in mind, however, that the project objectives cannot be changed between step 1 and 2.

### Types of outputs

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme has pre-defined four categories of project outputs which put emphasis on policy support and implementation-oriented approaches (please see part B chapter II.3 for further information on this):

- ◆ Strategy and action plan development and/or implementation
- ◆ Tool development and/or implementation
- ◆ Pilot actions
- ◆ Trainings
- ◆ Innovation networks (only applicable to SO 1.1)

For each programme specific objective a set of programme output indicators has been defined following the typology of outputs as indicated above. In order to provide project applicants with practical guidance and a common understanding of the definition of output indicators, more detailed information is provided in annex III (types of outputs and programme specific output indicators).

For each project output and deliverable, besides a brief description, also its quantification and planned delivery date have to be provided.

#### **Each thematic work package must have at least one output.**

In order to ensure a transparent work plan structure and to focus the activities within one work package, it is recommended to avoid foreseeing too many different output types (strategies, tools etc.) within a single work package. However, a work package can contain several outputs of the same type (e.g. 7 pilot actions in 7 different regions participating in a project).

Attention should be paid to how outputs can be used by the **target groups** addressed, as well as to their durability and transferability in order to achieve the intended results.

In this context the main targets groups for the work package outputs have to be chosen from a list of pre-defined target groups (see annex IV classification of target groups). It should be also described how those target groups and other stakeholders will be involved in the development of the foreseen outputs.

Whereas in the light application form (step 1) applicants have to provide general information on the **durability and transferability** of the foreseen outputs and results at project level - see chapter IV.2.3.2 (section C.2 of the application form), in the full application form (step 2) information on sustainability and transferability is required for the main project outputs at work package level.



## Work package: preparation

The work package preparation is to be filled-in only in the full application form (step 2).

In case a project foresees to claim the lump sum for preparation cost, as explained in part B, chapter II.7.4, the preparation work package has to be created, however no information is to be provided. Financial information is to be included in section E partner budget.

## Work package: management

The work package management is to be filled-in only in the full application form (step 2).

In order to successfully reach its objectives, the project has to set up a sound coordination and management structure (see also part C chapter V).

The project management has not only to ensure the implementation of the tasks described in the application form according to the foreseen timeline but, amongst others, also to:

- ◆ safeguard a clear division of tasks and effective involvement of the partners, efficient operational management and a sound information flow within the partnership
- ◆ set up a dedicated financial management system which includes the validation of expenditure by authorised national controllers
- ◆ set up tools monitoring the project performance, quality management and evaluations or reviews.

In addition, internal communication within the partnership forms part of the management work package.

The following four pre-defined and compulsory activities have to be foreseen within the management work package:

### Pre-defined management activities

Activity 1	<b>Start-up activities</b> (e.g. signature of the partnership agreement, kick off meeting, setting up of management structures, etc.)
Activity 2	Day to day <b>project management, coordination</b> (tools and procedures, incl. coordination meetings, monitoring of progress of activities and preparation of reports, quality management) and <b>internal communication</b>
Activity 3	<b>Steering and monitoring of the project implementation</b> (structure and procedures, meeting of the decision making bodies / steering committee / advisory board, appraisal of project progress and management such as evaluation and reviews)
Activity 4	<b>Financial management</b> (incl. monitoring of incurred expenditure, transfer of funds and cash flow management), preparation of necessary documentation in view of the <b>validation of expenditure and of controls/audits</b>

For each of the pre-defined activities the respective deliverables have to be defined. Please keep in mind that within the management work package no outputs are to be foreseen. Project outputs relate only to thematic achievements and are therefore only to be included in the thematic work packages.

### Work package: communication

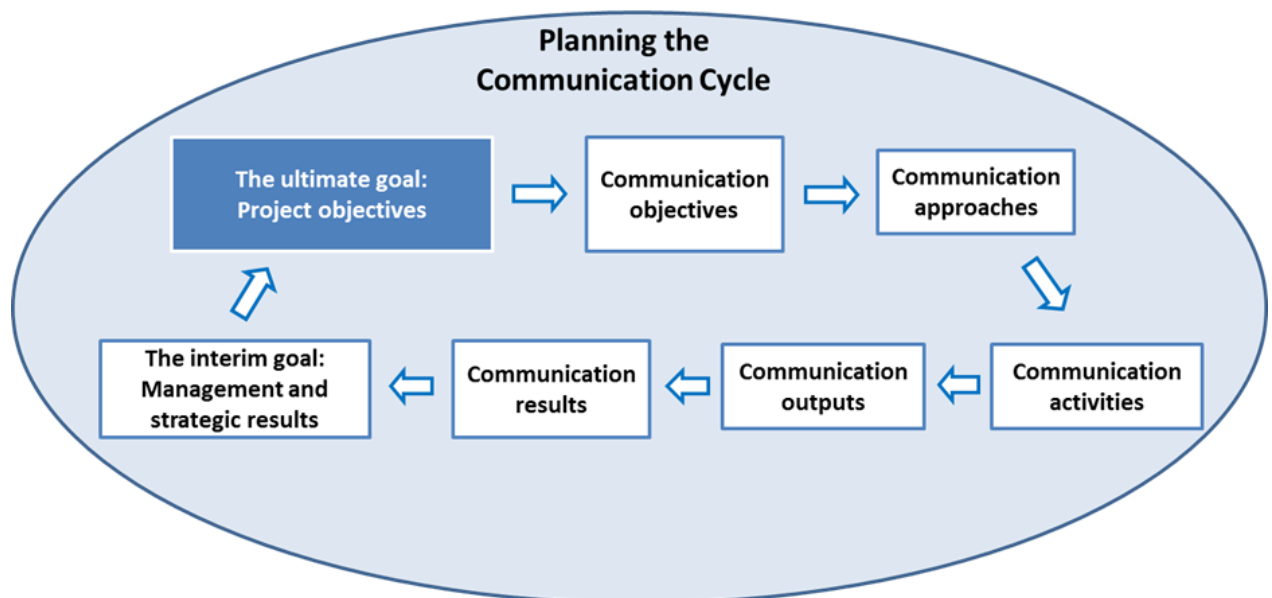
The work package communication is to be filled-in only in the full application form (step 2).

Communication is a horizontal project task which is not limited to one project partner. The capacity to communicate has to be built among all project partners and all partners need to be involved in communication activities. The coordination of all communication planning and implementation lies with the leader of this work package in close cooperation with the lead partner.

Communication plays a strategic role in successful CENTRAL EUROPE projects. Communication helps projects to achieve the change they aim for with their thematic activities. When developing project communication objectives it is thus important to bear in mind that these objectives have to be intrinsically linked to the specific project objectives defined earlier on.

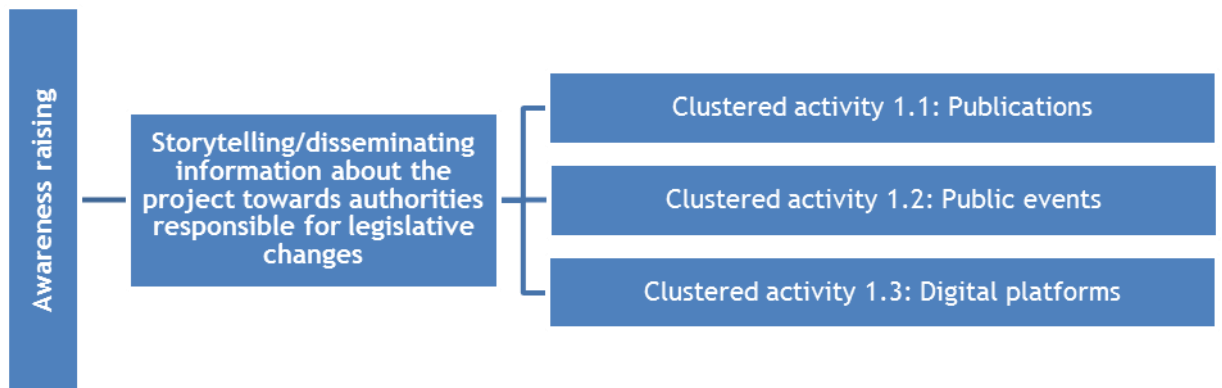
### Objectives, approaches and activities: How to plan communication?

Starting point for relevant project communication is to choose **communication objectives** linked to specific project objectives. In a second step, **communication approaches** (i.e. the methodology) need to be defined, which outline how a communication objective will be reached; **communication activities** have then to be linked to these approaches and to target specific audiences with specific messages.



In the application form projects have to define how communication will contribute to reaching specific project objectives. It is expected to define approaches how projects want to reach these communication objectives in view of specific project target audience(s) (see annex IV for types of target groups). Based on these approaches, communication activities finally have to be planned and implemented. An example of how they build on each other is provided below:

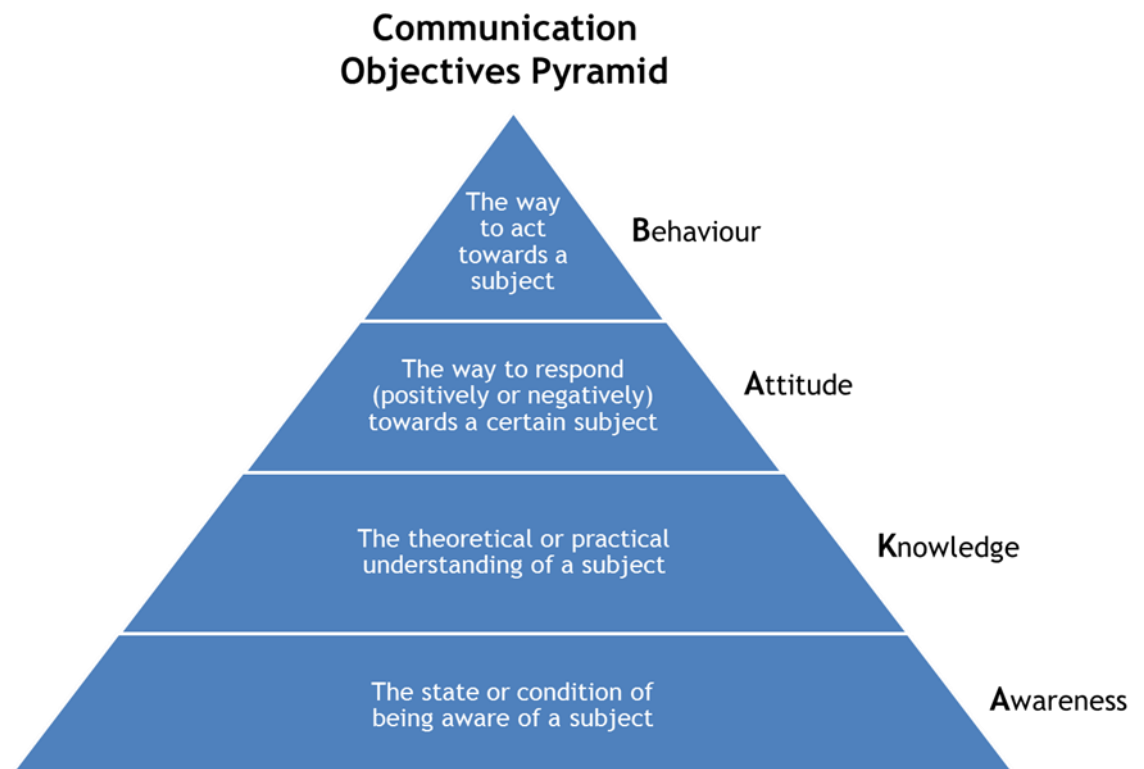
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Communication objectives, approaches and activities are described below.

**Communication objectives:** What can communications do to reach a specific project objective? The first step is to determine what a project would like to achieve by communicating. To facilitate the choice of communication objectives for the projects, the programme has pre-defined four basic objectives:

- ◆ Raise awareness
- ◆ Increase knowledge
- ◆ Influence attitude
- ◆ Change behaviour



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For each specific project objective one or more of the above communication objectives (building on each other as pictured in the pyramid) might be chosen. For each communication objective the approach has to be further specified in the next step.

**Communication approaches:** How can communication objectives be reached in view of a specific audience? Which channels and tactics are to be used for reaching which audience? Defining the methodological approach requires a closer look at your audiences' habits, environments, attitudes, etc. The aim is to identify the best ways of how to get messages across to them. Does the project want to cooperate closely with them or rather build up public pressure? Should the audience hear or rather feel the message (appealing to the mind or the heart)?

The project should shortly describe what kind of approach it plans to follow to reach the chosen objective.

#### EXAMPLE

*Projects could first use large-scale dissemination and story-telling to raise overall awareness and, after that, concentrate on rather focused training targeted at specific audiences to improve their knowledge. Other possible approaches could include visualisation for building basic knowledge and then, based on that, open and transparent dialogue for changing attitudes. Building up public pressure for changing attitudes or behaviour might also be an approach of choice for some projects.*

**Communication activities:** With which concrete tools and activities can an approach be implemented best? Activities and tools come at the very end of the planning process. The project should think creatively about specific kinds of events, digital measures or any other communication activity that helps you to implement the approach you defined.

To facilitate the choice of communication activities for the projects, the programme has pre-defined clusters of basic activities from which the projects have to choose in a first step:

- ◆ **Start-up activities** include the preparation of a communication strategy at the project kick-off phase. The programme will provide a template of the communication strategy which could be adopted by the projects. Furthermore basic communication tools including the project website as well as office materials (event materials, etc.) will have to be implemented according to a binding project design manual provided by the programme. The development of individual project websites or project corporate identities will not be necessary (see explanation further below). Content maintenance (i.e. regular updates) of the project website has to be ensured.
- ◆ **Media relations** include all kind of activities leading to the publication of information about the project in print and digital news media, such as media releases and conferences, journalist on-site visits, editorial office visits, etc. As a general principle, the programme does not recommend paying for any publication of information in news media. If this is foreseen by a project, it has to be duly justified and pre-agreed with the MA/JS.
- ◆ **Publications** include any kind of print and digital product, such as leaflets, brochures, books and studies, which carry information about the project and its outputs.
- ◆ **Public events** include any kind of conference, campaign, road show or other larger-scale event activity, which communicate the project and its outputs to wider audiences.
- ◆ **Targeted events** include any kind of seminar, workshop, meeting, or other smaller-scale event activity, which communicate the project (or even part of it) and relevant outputs to targeted audiences.
- ◆ **Digital activities** include any kind of social media and multimedia activity (e.g. videos, animations etc.) beyond the project website hosted by the programme website (see start-up activity).
- ◆ **Promotional materials** should be limited to mainly office and event materials. A list of authorised promotional materials will be provided to projects<sup>5</sup>, while additional materials not included in this list shall be previously authorised by the MA/JS and shall be clearly linked to awareness-raising on the project's overall objective.

<sup>5</sup> This list is expected to be made available when launching step 2 of the first call.

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For the activity clusters above an indicative budget as well as start and end dates will have to be provided in the communication work package.

The activity clusters will also have to be broken down into more specific deliverables. For example the cluster “Publications” could be broken down into “Studies”, “Leaflets”, “Infographics” or other fitting deliverables. It is important to quantify these specific deliverables and to briefly describe them. Please indicate also to which communication objective a specific deliverable will contribute.

### Investment specification (if applicable)

The investment specification is to be filled-in only in the full application form (step 2).

Whereas in the light application form (step 1) pilot investments (if applicable) had to be briefly described under the thematic work package to which the investment is linked, within the full application form (step 2) **a separate investment specification for each investment exceeding EUR 15.000 total cost** has to be provided. Investments below EUR 15.000 total costs should be only described in the thematic work package and linked to a deliverable.

Irrespective of whether a separate investment specification is required, a specification at the level of each cost item composing the investment is to be provided under section E “Partner budget” of the application form with regard to **only** two following budget lines:

- ◆ Items referring to budget line 5 “Thematic equipment” (e.g. air quality monitoring equipment); and/or
- ◆ Items referring to budget line 6 “Infrastructure and works” (e.g. setting up ex-novo of a building or the adaptation of an existing infrastructure).

All other costs concerning an investment, but belonging to other budget lines, should be included under the thematic work package to which the investment is linked (see below).

For further information on the above mentioned budget lines, please refer to part B chapter II.7.3 on budget line specifications.

Guidance on the requirements for a pilot investment to be financed by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is provided in part B chapter II.3 describing the types of activities supported by the programme.

Within the investment specification the realisation of the investment is to be defined as output. All accompanying activities and deliverables linked to the investment (e.g. feasibility study, preparatory analysis etc.) have to be included solely in the thematic work package to which the pilot investment is linked to and not under the investment specification. Therefore related costs (such as staff costs, external expertise etc.) have to be included under the respective thematic work package.

#### EXAMPLE: Investment - Energy management for a public school

*The goal of the investment is setting up an energy monitoring system in a public school for improving its energy management. The building is owned by the project partner in charge of the investment. The investment consists of:*

- *Works such as the installation of electrical wiring and fittings estimated at EUR 12.000 total cost.*
- *Thematic equipment such as smart meters, computer and monitoring software estimated at EUR 9.000 total cost.*

*The total investment costs (composed of thematic equipment and works) amount to EUR 21.000, therefore the investment specification in the full application form has to be provided for this investment.*

Investments for which an investment specification has to be provided (i.e. exceeding EUR 15.000 total costs) should be linked to a pilot action carried out within a thematic work package.

The investment specification shall include the following information:

- ◆ Investment title
- ◆ Start and end date of investment implementation
- ◆ Technical description of the investment
- ◆ Justification (relevance, transnational added value, transferability etc.)
- ◆ Investment location (NUTS 0, 2 and 3)
- ◆ Risks associated with the investment (including potential negative effects on the environment and mitigation measures)
- ◆ Investment preparation (e.g. requirements and permissions), if applicable
- ◆ Investment ownership and durability
- ◆ Target groups of the investment

An investment for which an investment specification is provided is also considered as a project output (in addition to the types of outputs indicated under “thematic work packages”). It has to be linked to the category “investment” as included in the list of output indicators.

For technical reasons in eMS one “virtual” activity has to be defined (called e.g. “investment implementation”) which should reflect the start and end date of the investment implementation. Please note that no deliverable shall be foreseen, since the respective investment report will have to be delivered as output documentation (see also section B.2 of the implementation manual).

The target value should only reflect an active involvement of target groups, e.g. participation in trainings, interviews, workshops, local stakeholder groups, advisory boards, testing of tools, implementation of pilot actions etc.

#### **IV.2.4.3. Target groups (D.2)**

**This section is to be filled-in only in the full application form (step 2).**

This section provides an aggregation of the target groups which have been specified within the thematic work packages and investment specification(s) for the outputs/investments obtained in these.

A list of the target groups which were chosen within the work plan is automatically displayed. Those target groups should be further specified at the level of the entire project, including also an estimation of the target value set for targeting each group.

In this respect please refer also to annex IV which provides a classification of types of target groups

#### **IV.2.4.4. Activities outside the programme area (D.3)**

**This section is to be filled-in only in the full application form (step 2).**

In case activities are foreseen to be carried out outside the programme area (EU or third countries), those activities should be described and justified providing information on the following:

- ◆ What are the benefits for the regions of the programme area?
- ◆ Why are those activities essential for the implementation of the project?

Activities described in this section may also include planned missions and/or events outside the programme area.

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The indicative ERDF allocated to such activities within the project shall also be indicated under this section.

ATTENTION

*Please note that activities to be carried out outside the programme area which are not specified in this section of the application form will have to be previously authorised by the MA/JS in order to be considered as eligible.*

For further information on the location of project activities please refer to part B chapter II.2.

IV.2.4.5. Periods (D.4)

Out of technical reasons, in order to be able to fill-in section E/F “Budget” you have to firstly open section D.4 “Periods” (see screenshot below).

A - Project overview

B - Partners

C - Project description

D - Work plan

E - Partner budget

F - Project budget

G - Annexes

D. 4 - Define periods

PERIOD 0 (0 MONTH 1 DAYS)

Start Date

End Date

Reporting Date

01.06.2015

01.06.2015

PROJECTSTART (01/06/2015)

PERIOD 1 (6 MONTH 0 DAYS)

(automatic) Start Date

End Date

Reporting Date

01.06.2015

30.11.2015

30.01.2016

PERIOD 2 (6 MONTH 0 DAYS)

(automatic) Start Date

End Date

Reporting Date

01.12.2015

31.05.2016

31.07.2016

PERIOD 3 (6 MONTH 0 DAYS)

(automatic) Start Date

End Date

Reporting Date

01.06.2016

30.11.2016

30.01.2017

PERIOD 4 (6 MONTH 0 DAYS)

(automatic) Start Date

End Date

Reporting Date

01.12.2016

31.05.2017

31.07.2017

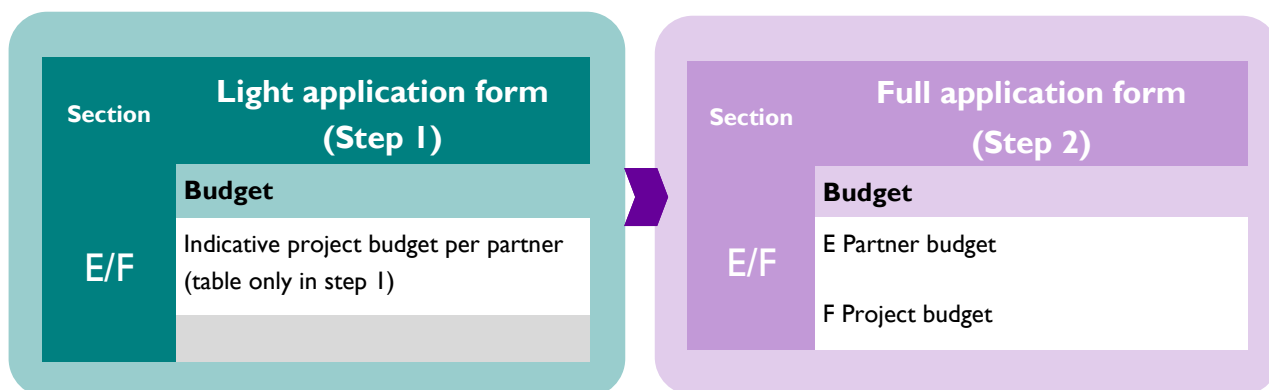
PROJECTEND (31/05/2017)

Recreate Periods

Following this step, the eMS will automatically generate the project reporting periods according to the project start and end date as entered in section A. Please note that no data have to be entered in this section.

In case the project start and end dates are changed in step 2 remind to click the “recalculate periods” button in order to ensure an updating of the periods.

## IV.2.5. Section E/F – Budget



Please note that the budget per partner can be filled in only after having defined at least one thematic work package in section D as well as after the creation of reporting periods in the eMS following the opening of section D.3 “Periods” (as explained in chapter IV.2.4.4).

In the light application form (step 1) only an indicative total budget for each project partner has to be inserted.

Applicants have to include, under the section E of the light application form, the provisional total budget allocated to each partner.

The partner table is partly pre-filled by the system with data on project partners entered under section B. As also explained in part C chapter VII, please remember that information to be included in the light application form (step 1) should be based on a first draft of the project budget already shared and agreed between all partners. This is of outmost importance due to the fact that only limited budget flexibility is allowed between step 1 and 2 of the call. **An application where the total budget is increased by more than 20 % becomes non-eligible for funding** (for further details please refer to chapter I).

### Step 2:

The starting point for the project budget is section E “Partner budget”. The budget of each partner is broken down per budget line, work package and reporting period. For further information on how to design a sound budget please see part C chapter VII.

In order to fill-in the budget section applicants first have to fill-in the following sections of the application form:

- ◆ Section B “Project partners” (at least the partner organisation data, NUTS and co-financing rate<sup>6</sup>)
- ◆ Section D “Work plan” (at least project work packages and reporting periods must be defined)

Steps to be undertaken when defining the budget in section E of the full application form are the following:

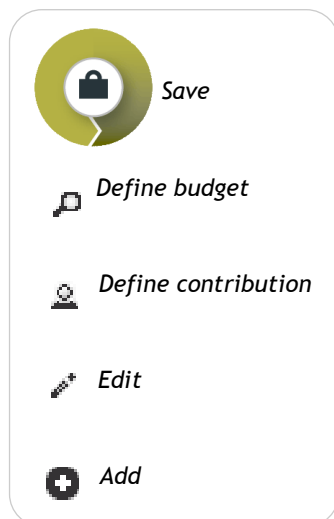
- a. To enter the budget of the partner click on the “Define Budget” button in the partner list of the section E “Partner budget”, and select the partner for which you want to enter the budget;
- b. At first, it is important to select the flat rate option in order to choose whether the concerned partner organisation will charge staff costs to the project according to real costs or a flat rate. Please note that, after the submission of the application form, **the partner will not have the possibility to change this choice anymore**. For further information please refer to part B chapter II.7.3.

<sup>6</sup> When filling in the budget please make sure that the co-financing rate applicable to the partners, as defined in part B, chapter II.6, is correctly selected.



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c. At this point three tables will be displayed on the screen:

- ⇒ The first table displaying budget lines and work packages;
- ⇒ The second table displaying budget lines and reporting periods;
- ⇒ The third table displaying reporting periods and work packages.

The applicant can enter the partner budget only in the first table “Budget lines and work packages”. The other two tables will be automatically updated once budget data are entered.

d. From the table “Budget lines and work packages”, the applicant has to click the “Edit Button” corresponding to the budget line and work package to be filled in. A pop-up window will open where the applicant has to enter the total amount allocated to each reporting period for the chosen budget line and work package. The following specifications apply to the different budget lines as well as to preparation costs and revenues:

- ⇒ For budget line 1 **“Staff costs”**: one aggregated amount is to be included for the entire work package and reporting period. Partner institutions choosing the flat rate option for the reimbursement of staff costs cannot enter data, since the budget allocated to this budget line is automatically calculated;
- ⇒ For budget line 2 **“Office and administrative expenditure”**: data cannot be entered since the budget allocated to this budget line is automatically calculated.
- ⇒ For budget line 3 **“Travel and accommodation costs”**: one aggregated amount is to be included for the entire work package and reporting period.
- ⇒ For budget line 4 **“External expertise and services costs”**, budget line 5 **“Equipment expenditure”** and budget line 6 **“Infrastructure and works expenditure”**: a breakdown of the budget line at the level of each item included under this budget line is to be created by clicking on the **“Add Button”**. A pop-up window will appear in which the applicant has to specify for each concerned item to be purchased the number of the deliverable as listed in section D of the application form as well as the nature and quantity of the item. In the case of equipment items, information is to be included also on the equipment type (i.e. **“equipment for general office use”** or **“thematic equipment”** - please see part B, chapter II.7.3). The budget allocated to the single cost item has then to be entered at the corresponding work package and reporting period following the procedure described above.
- ⇒ The lump sum for preparation costs must be allocated to the concerned partner (s) by creating a new line under budget line 4 **“External expertise and services costs”** following the same procedure as described above. In this new line it must be specified that it refers to the lump sum for preparation costs and the amount allocated to the partner must be entered under work package **“Preparation”** and period 0. Please remember that the total amount allocated to a project for preparation costs cannot exceed EUR 15.000. For further information on preparation costs please see part B chapter II.7.4.
- ⇒ In case that the project proposal is expected to generate **revenues** (as specified under part B chapter II.7.5), the expected net revenues must be included in the relevant category available in the budget table. One aggregated amount is to be included for the entire work package and reporting period.

**When entering data, please remember to regularly save by clicking the “Save Button” at the bottom of the pop-up window. If you close the window without saving your data will be lost!**

e. Once the partner budget is inserted, information on national co-financing type and source is to be included by clicking the **“Define Contribution Button”** available in the partner list of section E **“Partner budget”**. Under this section two tables are available. The first one presents the overall programme co-financing and the partner contribution according to the applicable co-financing rate (automatically filled-in by the system), while the second one refers to the partner co-financing sources and is to be filled in by the applicant. In the table on partner co-financing sources, the system by default includes the partners’ own resources as first co-financing source, in line with information on legal status which is automatically transferred from section B.

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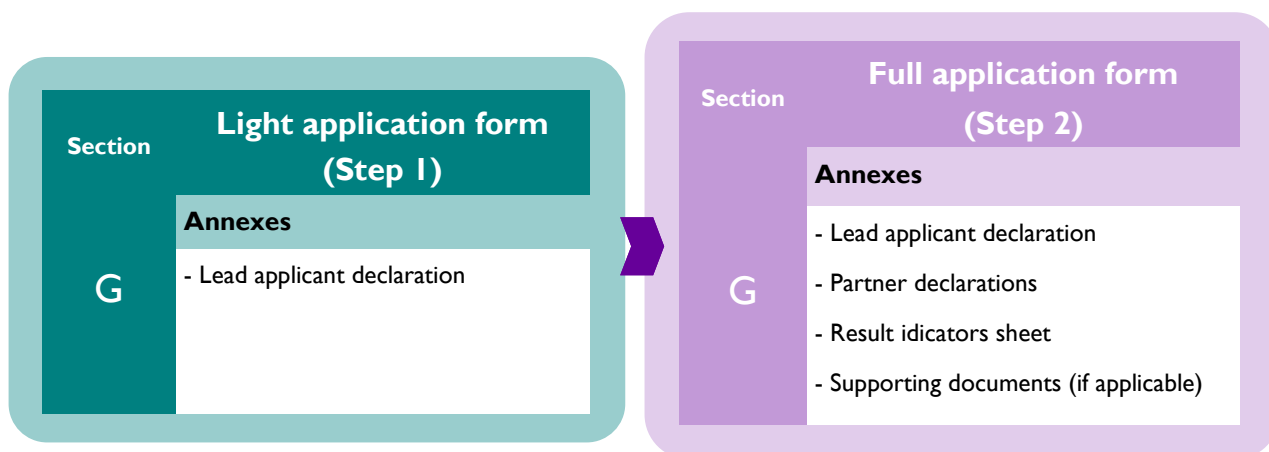
To add other co-financing sources the applicant has to click on the “Add Button” and fill-in information on the source of co-financing, the legal status (i.e. private, public, automatic public) and the amount. Please check carefully the consistency of the total amount of co-financing manually entered in the second table with the amount automatically calculated in the first table!

Automatic public co-financing refers to specific co-financing schemes set up by some Member States (e.g. the “Rotation Fund” in Italy). Total public expenditure is to be understood as the ERDF co-financing plus all public contributions and automatic public contributions. In case the partner budget is changed, please remind to update the information in the partner contribution section.

**When entering data, please remember to regularly save by clicking the “Save Button” on top of the main menu (left side of the screen). If you leave a section without saving your data will be lost!**

The overall project budget coming from data entered at partner level can be seen in section F “Project budget” of the application form. Each budget table available under section F can also be exported as an Excel file.

### IV.2.6. Section G – Annexes



The template of **lead applicant declaration for step 1** is provided as annex V.

The declaration has to be filled in in all its parts and signed by the legal representative (or delegated person) of the lead applicant and has to be uploaded in the eMS as a scanned document. In case of signature by a delegated person, the signed declaration must be accompanied by a document confirming the validity of such delegation.

#### ATTENTION

*Please note that in case of missing signature of the lead applicant declaration, the application becomes non-eligible.*

#### Step 2:

##### Lead applicant and partner declarations

The content of the lead applicant declaration for step 2 is more extensive than that of the declaration for step 1. In addition, within step 2 also each partner has to provide a partner declaration differentiated according to the type of institution applying as project partner. Lead applicant and partner declarations are differentiated according to the legal status of the applicant.

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Lead applicant and partner declarations are organised in the following sections:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Section 1 | “Identification” contains information on the application form and the declarant as mentioned in the full application form;   |
| Section 2 | “Lead applicant/partner declaration” contains the actual set of legal declarations which a lead applicant or a partner must provide in order to apply in the framework of the Interreg CE Programme; |
| Section 3 | “State aid declaration” serves for collecting information ensuring the compliance with the applicable State aid rules and contains detailed guidance on State aid;                                   |
| Section 4 | “Signature” contains relevant declarations as well as the date, stamp and signature of the declarant.  |

Lead applicant and partner declarations also contain a complimentary abstract of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 which is for information purposes only and should not be included in the signed declaration submitted within step 2 of the call.

The templates of lead applicant and partner declarations are provided as annex V as fillable pdf documents. In order to be filled in, the following requirements apply:

- ◆ Only Adobe Reader 8.0 or higher is to be used for filling in the declarations. When using other software the form does not work properly. The latest version of the reader may be downloaded for free at <http://get.adobe.com/reader>;
- ◆ The JavaScript option of the Adobe Reader installed in your computer must be enabled. To check it please go to: main menu > Edit > Preferences > JavaScript.

### ATTENTION

*The templates of lead applicant and partner declarations are interactive forms where some parts are only visible when certain options are selected and where guidance boxes disappear in the print-out of the declarations. Accordingly, please note that print-outs of the declarations may not reflect the applicable text if they are not properly filled in!*

Declarations have to be filled in in all their parts and signed by the legal representatives (or delegated persons) of the concerned institutions (lead applicant or partners) and have to be uploaded in the system as scanned documents. In case of signature by delegated persons, each affected declaration must be accompanied by a document confirming the validity of such delegation.

### ATTENTION

*Please note that in case of missing signature of the lead applicant and/or any partner declaration, the application becomes non-eligible. For further information on the formal/administrative requirements to be observed when submitting the full application form please refer to chapter V.2.*

## Result indicators sheet

Applicants have to quantify, in step 2, targets for additional thematic and communication result indicators as explained in chapter IV.2.3.4 and annex III of the manual.

This information has to be provided in a separate sheet as a compulsory annex to the full application form. The template of the result indicators sheet (fillable pdf document) is provided as annex VIII.

## Supporting documents in case of private lead applicants

Further supporting documents of administrative and financial nature have to be provided as annex to the full application form in case of private lead applicants. They consist of the following:

- a. The filled-in "Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE simplified financial statement" (provided as annex VII) in which the private lead applicant is asked to transcribe - under its responsibility - the official financial data of the latest available financial documents. The simplified financial statement table must be completely filled in and uploaded as an Excel file.
- b. The most recent balance sheet and profit and loss account, to be uploaded as a scanned pdf file, printable in A4 paper format. If the lead applicant does not yet have a balance sheet and profit and loss account, because the organisation has only recently been created, it must provide a management/business plan (for at least 12 months in the future) with the financial data prepared in accordance with the standard required under national legislation.
- c. An audit report issued by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last financial year. This document is to be delivered by a professionally qualified auditor who is independent from the applicant's organisation and who is listed in Member States official auditors registers. The audit document must be uploaded as a scanned .pdf file, printable in A4 paper format. In the case of a newly created organisation, the auditor's certificate provided must be based on a management/business plan where the financial data are presented in accordance with relevant national provisions.

### ATTENTION

*Please note that for both step 1 and step 2 only scanned versions of the signed documents have to be provided. Signed hard-copies of the application form and its annexes are to be provided only when an application is recommended for funding (i.e. during the contracting phase.)*

## V. Project assessment and contracting

The assessment of received applications follows a standardised procedure safeguarding the principles of transparency and equal treatment as described below.

### V.1 Assessment procedure - step 1

#### A. Formal/administrative compliance check

Formal/administrative requirements to be observed when submitting the light application form (step 1) are:

- ◆ Submission of the proposal before the deadline set in the call announcement;
- ◆ Submission of the application form completed in all its parts and in English language ;
- ◆ Respect of the minimum partnership requirements (i.e. at least three financing partners from at least three countries, being at least two of the partners located in CENTRAL EUROPE regions);
- ◆ Respect of the lead applicant requirements (i.e. lead applicants cannot be located in regions outside the programme area, with the exception of assimilated partners; international organisations acting under international law cannot be lead applicants);
- ◆ Submission of signed lead applicant declarations filled-in in the template provided by the programme without any modification, as further explained in chapter IV.2.6.

#### ATTENTION

Proposals failing in any of the above requirements will be regarded as non-eligible and will not be further processed.

Since all application forms are submitted online via the online submission system, most of the above formal/administrative requirements will be automatically checked by the system during the submission of the application in order to help applicants avoiding mistakes. However, the check of the compliance of each proposal with the above requirements, including the correctness of the submitted annexes, will be carried out during the quality assessment of the proposal.

In case of applications bearing mistakes of formal/administrative nature other than the ones listed above, lead applicants will have the possibility to heal such mistakes. Lead applicants will be asked by the MA/JS to provide corrected documents, through eMS upload, within 5 working days from the date of written request from the MA/JS. In case that lead applicants fail to upload the corrected documents on eMS within the given timeframe, the project proposal shall be regarded as non-eligible and shall not be further processed.

The result of the administrative compliance check will be communicated to the lead applicant following the decision of the programme monitoring committee on the matter.

#### ATTENTION

*Please note that in case of missing signature of the lead applicant declaration, the application becomes non-eligible.*

## B. Quality assessment

The quality assessment of the light application forms focuses on the relevance and partnership of the application. Out of the full set of assessment criteria, as described in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme document (under section 2 “Guiding principles for selection of operations”), within step 1 only the **strategic assessment criteria** are applied.

The figure below gives an overview on the quality assessment criteria applied to proposals submitted within step 1 of the call.

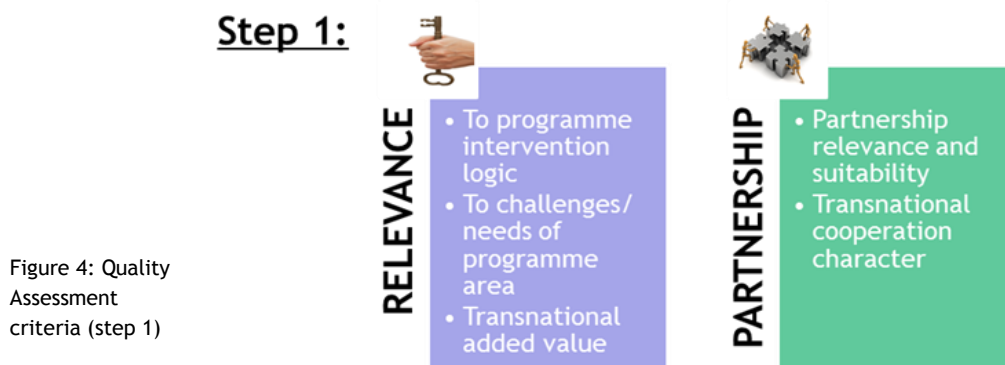


Figure 4: Quality Assessment criteria (step 1)

The assessment grid is structured according to the concerned assessment criteria and sub-criteria which are appraised using the following scale:

5 excellent”	The application fulfils the given criterion to an excellent level and the provided information is sufficient, clear and coherent for assessing the criterion.
4 good”	The application fulfils well the given criterion; however the provided information includes minor shortcomings.
3 adequate”	The application fulfils the given criterion to a sufficient level however some aspects of the given criterion have not been met fully or not explained in full clarity or detail.
2 poor	The application has serious shortcomings in fulfilling the given criterion and/or the provided information is of low quality.
1 insufficient”	The application does not fulfil the given criterion/or information required is missing.

The quality assessment of step 1 will be performed according to the strategic criteria “relevance” and “partnership”, by applying the following guiding questions under each criterion:

Strategic assessment criteria step 1	
<b>1. Relevance</b>	
1.1	How relevant is the project proposal in relation to the targeted programme specific objective and the expected result? How well are common and territorial challenges and needs of the programme area in relation to the targeted programme specific objective addressed?
1.2	Are the specific project objectives and expected results clearly defined and consistent?
1.3	Is the importance and added value of the transnational cooperation approach to the topic addressed clearly demonstrated?
<b>2. Partnership</b>	
2.1	Does the lead applicant have sufficient experience and capacity to manage a transnational cooperation project?
2.2	Does the partnership include sufficient competences and expertise to implement the planned activities and to achieve the planned results?
2.3	Does the partnership composition reflect the transnational cooperation approach?

The decision on projects to be invited to step 2 of the call will be made by the monitoring committee of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme on the basis of results of the assessment described above.

The number of applications invited to step 2 will ensure an adequate competition in step 2. Accordingly, pre-selection for step 2 can by no means be considered already as a selection of the project to be funded.

## V.2 Assessment procedure - step 2

### A. Formal/administrative compliance check

Formal/administrative requirements to be observed when submitting the full application form (step 2 of the call) are:

- ◆ Submission of the proposal before the deadline set in the invitation;
- ◆ Submission of the application form completed in all its parts and in English language ;
- ◆ Respect of the compulsory continuity requirements between step 1 and 2 of the call (i.e. project focus, partnership and budget, as presented in chapter I);
- ◆ Participation in at least one supporting measure organised by the programme (either consultation or training) during step 2 of the call<sup>7</sup>;
- ◆ Submission of the lead applicant and all partner declarations signed and filled in in all their parts using the template provided by the programme (writable pdf file) without any modification, as further explained in chapter IV.2.6.
- ◆ In case of private lead applicant, availability of all other supporting documents as listed in chapter IV.2.6.

#### ATTENTION

Proposals failing in any of the above requirements will be regarded as non-eligible and will not be further processed.

Similar to applications submitted within step 1 of the call, the online submission system will automatically check the respect of most of the above formal/administrative requirements in order to help applicants avoiding mistakes. However, the check of the compliance of each proposal with the above requirements, including the correctness of the submitted annexes, will be carried out during the quality assessment of the proposal.

In case of applications bearing mistakes of formal/administrative nature other than the ones listed above, lead applicants will have the possibility to heal such mistakes. Lead applicants will be asked by the MA/JS to provide corrected documents, through eMS upload, within 5 working days from the date of written healing request from the MA/JS. In case that lead applicants fail to upload the corrected documents on eMS within the given timeframe, the project proposal shall be regarded as non-eligible and shall not be further processed.

The result of the administrative compliance check will be communicated to the lead applicant following decision of the monitoring committee on the matter.

#### ATTENTION

*Please note that in case of missing signature of the lead applicant and/or any partner declaration, the application becomes non-eligible.*

<sup>7</sup> For further information on the confirmation of attendance to the transnational lead applicant training and confirmation of implemented individual consultation please see part E, chapter II.

## B. Financial capacity check for private lead applicants

On the basis of the information contained in the documents submitted by private lead applicants (as listed in chapter IV.2.6), a financial capacity check is performed **when assessing project proposals submitted in step 2 of the call**. The check is aimed at assessing whether "the applicant has stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain his activity throughout the project implementation period and to participate in its funding<sup>8</sup>. As a general principle, the financial capacity check will have to demonstrate that the private lead applicant:

- ◆ Has sufficient liquidity - is able to cover its short-term commitments;
- ◆ Is financially autonomous;
- ◆ Is solvent - capable of covering its medium and long-term commitments;
- ◆ Is profitable - generates profits, or at least with self-financing capacity.

A project proposal shall be regarded as **non-eligible** and shall not be further processed in case that the private lead applicant falls in one of the following situations:

- ◆ The auditor's report or auditor-certified balance sheet and profit and loss account provided with the project proposal has not given an "unqualified opinion" about the private lead applicant's financial viability;
- ◆ On the basis of the financial viability test (see here below), it is concluded that:
  - ⇒ The private lead applicant does not have the financial capacity to cover its share of co-financing within the proposed project period; and/or
  - ⇒ The private lead applicant does not have the capacity to manage the financial amounts provided for in the budget within the proposed project period.

The **financial viability** test of the private lead applicant is carried out as follows:

For private commercial organisations, at least criteria No. 1 and 2 of the following four criteria must be respected:	
1.	The ratio "total grant requested divided by the number of project years" / "shareholders' equity" is <b>lower than 1</b>
2.	The ratio "current assets" / "current liabilities" is <b>higher than 1</b>
3.	The ratio "total debts" / "total assets" is <b>lower than 0.8</b>
4.	There is a <b>positive</b> operational profit
For private non commercial organisations, at least two of the following three criteria must be respected:	
1.	The ratio "total grant requested divided by the number of project years" / "subsidies" is <b>lower than 1</b>
2.	The ratio "current assets" / "current liabilities" is <b>higher than 1</b>
3.	The ratio "total debts" / "total assets" is <b>lower than 0.8</b>

<sup>8</sup> As provided for in Article 202 of Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1268/2012.



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The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme provides a complimentary tool for calculating the ratios of the financial viability test (available for download on [www.interreg-central/call](http://www.interreg-central/call)). Please note that the use of this tool is under the sole responsibility of the applicants and programme bodies do not bear any responsibility for possible non functioning or misuse of this tool.

Please note that **the programme does not perform the financial capacity check within step 1 of the call.** Moreover, as mentioned under chapter I it is not possible to change lead applicant between step 1 and step 2 of the call. When checked in step 2 of the call, the entire proposal will be rejected when the private lead applicant does not meet the necessary financial capacity criteria. This considered, **the programme strongly recommends private lead applicants to check their ability to fulfil the financial capacity criteria mentioned in this chapter already when applying in step 1.**

### C. Legal status check

Checks on the correctness of the legal status as declared by the applicants will be carried out by competent national authorities of the concerned Member States. Such authorities might require additional documents in order to confirm the legal status declared by the applicants. Information on this will be published on the programme website under “country specific information” pages.

In case of applicants located in EU regions outside the programme area<sup>9</sup>, the correctness of their legal status declared when submitting the proposal is to be confirmed by competent national authorities of the respective Member States outside the programme area. This confirmation is to be obtained at the latest at the day of the MC decision for funding for the call (date of the MC meeting deciding for funding). If the legal status confirmation by the competent national authorities is not available at that date, the concerned projects will be approved upon condition that the confirmation is obtained within 45 calendar days from the date of the MC funding decision for the call. If, after this deadline, the legal status confirmation by the competent national authorities is not available, the concerned applicants will be excluded from the projects and the lead partners must initiate the partnership modification procedure as described in chapter D.3 of the programme implementation manual.

It is a duty of the applicants located in EU regions outside the programme area to obtain the legal status confirmation by their competent national authorities, however the MA/JS will support the process to the possible extent.

### D. Analysis of state aid relevance

The analysis is aimed at checking the state aid relevance of activities planned to be carried out by undertakings within the project proposal.

The state aid analysis of proposals will be performed during the quality assessment of full applications submitted within step 2 of the call, on the basis of information included in the application form. During the state aid analysis, the MA/JS might approach lead applicants and/or partners in order to collect further information necessary for a proper assessment of state aid relevance of the proposal.

The result of the state aid assessment performed within step 2 of the call will be validated by the programme monitoring committee.

For further information on the approach followed by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme with regard to state aid please refer to part B chapter II.7.7.

<sup>9</sup> With the exception of applicants located in regions of Germany and Italy outside the programme area.

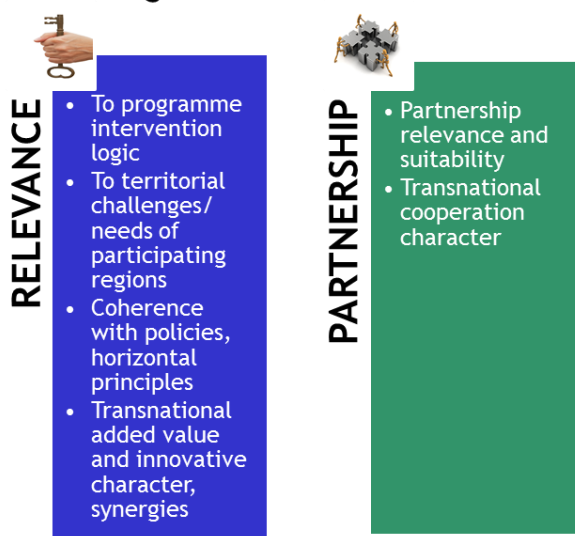
## E. Quality assessment

Applications passing the checks described in the above points a) -and, where applicable, b) will enter into the quality assessment phase of step 2.

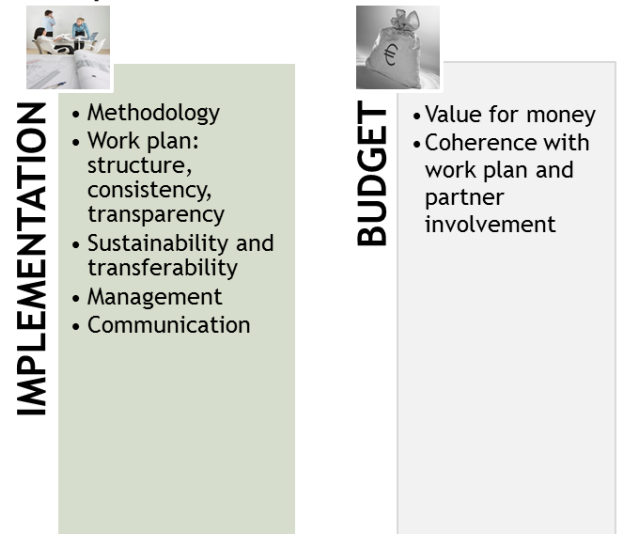
In step 2 the full set of strategic and operational assessment criteria, described under section 2 "Guiding principles for selection of operations" of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme document, will be applied. The following illustration provides an overview on the four assessment criteria.

Figure 5: Quality assessment criteria (step 2)

### Step 2: Strategic assessment criteria



### Operational assessment criteria



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The quality assessment will be performed applying the following guiding questions under each criterion. For the appraisal of criteria the same scale ranging from 1 to 5, as described for step 1, will be used.

Strategic assessment criteria step 2	
<b>1. Relevance</b>	
1.1	How relevant is the project proposal in relation to the targeted programme specific objective and the expected result? How well are common and territorial challenges and needs of the programme area in relation to the targeted programme specific objective addressed?
1.2	Are the specific project objectives, expected results and outputs clearly defined and consistent?
1.3	Is the importance and added value of the transnational cooperation approach to the topic addressed clearly demonstrated?
1.4	How relevant is the project in relation to territorial challenges and needs of the participating regions?
1.5	How relevant is the project to the existing policy framework (at EU, national, regional levels) applicable for the thematic scope of the project? Are eventual contributions to macro-regional strategies clearly specified? How well does the project integrate horizontal principles (i.e. sustainable development, environment, equality)?
1.6	How far does the project go beyond existing practice in the sector and/or participating regions? If applicable, does it build on available knowledge and make use of synergies with other projects or initiatives?
<b>2. Partnership</b>	
2.1	Does the lead applicant have sufficient experience and capacity to manage a transnational cooperation project?
2.2	Is the partnership suitable and does it include sufficient competences/expertise to implement the planned activities and to achieve the expected results? In case of partners outside the programme area, is the added value of their participation duly justified?
2.3	Does the partnership composition reflect the transnational cooperation approach? Are all partners actively involved to jointly implement the foreseen activities and have a defined role?
Operational assessment criteria	
<b>3. Implementation</b>	
3.1	Is the planned approach/methodology suitable to obtain the intended outputs and results? In case of investments foreseen, are they clearly linked to reaching the project objectives and do they have a clear transnational character?
3.2	Are the work plan and timing of activities, deliverables and outputs realistic, consistent and transparent? Are activities, deliverables and outputs in a logical time-sequence? Is the overall project duration realistic to achieve the foreseen outputs?
3.3	How well does the project demonstrate the sustainability and transferability of outputs and results? To which extent are target groups (and other stakeholders) involved in the development of the outputs?
3.4	Does the management structure show sufficient potential to secure sound financial management and content wise management of the project?
3.5	Do communication objectives help reaching specific project objectives and bring about the change the project aims for with its thematic activities? Are defined communication approaches fitting these communication objectives in view of specific project target audiences? Are chosen activities and concrete tools best fitting the defined communication approaches?
<b>4. Budget</b>	
4.1	Does the total budget demonstrate value for money?
4.2	Is there coherence between project design and budget?
4.3	Are the financial contributions of the partners balanced and do they reflect partner responsibilities?

The quality assessment of applications submitted in step 2 of the call is based on the full application form containing much more comprehensive information than in step 1 and will cover more aspects. Furthermore, in the full application form some information could have changed compared to the light application form submitted in step 1. Therefore a completely new assessment also of the strategic criteria is carried out. This assessment is independent from the one performed in step 1, therefore the result of the assessment of strategic criteria performed in step 2 might differ from the result of step 1.

Decision on projects to be funded will be made by the monitoring committee of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme on the basis of the results of the assessment described above.

## **V.3. Communication to lead applicants and resolution of complaints**

### **V.3.1. Communication to lead applicants**

After the finalisation of each step of the call, the lead applicants will be notified in writing about the outcome of the respective step, notably the respective monitoring committee decision. In case of non-eligible or not-approved applications, information to lead applicants will include details on the reason for non-eligibility or non-approval.

In case that questions in relation to the assessment or selection procedure remain unsettled, the MA/JS will try to provide further clarifications through communication as may be deemed appropriate in that particular case. If reasons for complaints apply, a formal complaint can be filed by the lead applicant.

Further details on the procedure for complaints will be provided at the latest when communicating to lead applicants the result of step 1 of the call.

### **V.3.2. Resolution of complaints**

According to Article 74(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 a complaint procedure shall be set-up for the Programme by the participating countries. The purpose of this is to ensure effective examination of complaints.

In the framework of the Interreg CE Programme, complaints may be made if failures during the project selection process of an application affecting the funding decision are suspected. Failure means that the project assessment did not comply with the selection criteria and/or the procedures laid down in the cooperation programme and in the specific call documents (application manual). Also technical mistakes may occur resulting in an incomplete or wrong assessment. If a project is not selected for funding as a consequence of such failures, the lead applicant has the right to submit a formal complaint.

Complaints against the project selection process have to be submitted by the lead applicant on behalf of all project partners via e-mail to the MA within 14 calendar days after the notification on the funding decision of the respective call. The lead applicant shall clearly specify what failures or mistakes have happened during the assessment of the proposal and include clear references to the relevant programme documents (cooperation programme, application manual, other call-specific documents).

Prior to filing a complaint, the lead applicant is strongly recommended to request additional technical or legal information to the MA/JS within the timeframe (14 calendar days) available for submitting a complaint (as presented above). Experience has shown that technical exchanges on this level between the lead applicant and the MA/JS brought to a quick clarification of the concerned cases minimising administrative burden. Submission of requests of information interrupts the deadline for submitting a complaint until the day of the reply by the MA/JS to the lead applicant. The lead applicant may indicate the preference for a written or oral answer on the submitted request. Oral answers or explanations will be provided directly by a MA or JS officer in charge of the case.

If, following the answer submitted by the MA/JS, the lead applicant is not satisfied with the received additional information, it may decide to submit a formal complaint to the MA. A confirmation of receipt of any written complaint is sent by the MA/JS to the complainant within 3 working days.

## Part D

### How to apply with us

If a complaint includes an incomplete description of a case that does not allow for a thorough assessment by the MA/JS or another competent body to be involved, further information may be requested at any time of the procedure. If the information requested is not provided within the period of time as specified by the requesting authority/body (at least 3 working days) the case shall be closed without further investigation.

Different procedures apply for the resolution of complaints depending on the subject of the complaint.

#### a) Complaint on formal/administrative aspects

In case of a complaint concerning the formal/administrative compliance check of the project proposal<sup>10</sup>, the legal status check of applicants<sup>11</sup> or, where applicable, the financial capacity check of the private lead applicant<sup>12</sup>, the complaint is examined by the JS, on the basis of the information brought forward by the lead applicant. Following this analysis the MA, in consultation with the MC member of the country of the lead applicant, will assess the case and decide whether the complaint is justified or not and will inform the MC on the decision taken. The MA and/or the concerned MC member may also refer the complaint to the entire MC for decision making. The MC may also set up a task force or a sub-committee to deal with the complaints and in this case the MA will inform the lead applicant on such a procedure including a provisional timeline for the settlement of the case, where possible.

If the complaint is considered justified, the MA/JS will review the project application and the related assessment part, subject to the complaint. This process will involve JS staff (and/or external experts where applicable) different from the ones involved in the first assessment of the project in question. The MA/JS will then provide the MC with an updated assessment on which basis the MC will take a new decision.

The final decision on the complaint is communicated by the MA to the lead applicant in writing. This decision will be final, binding to all parties and not subject to any further complaint proceedings within the programme if the complaint is based on the same grounds.

#### b) Complaint on quality and State aid aspects

In case of a complaint concerning the quality assessment<sup>13</sup> or State aid assessment<sup>14</sup> of the project proposal, the assessment of the project proposal and the related MC decision cannot be reviewed. However, the lead applicant may request further information and details to the MA/JS on the assessment performed and the reasons for rejecting the project proposal or considering it as State aid relevant. This information and details can be provided to the lead applicant - if requested - also in the framework of a meeting at the premises of the MA/JS. Such a feedback might be advisable in case of a non-successful participation in a call combined with a planned participation in future calls.

<sup>10</sup> As described in chapter V.1, point a. and chapter V.2 point a.

<sup>11</sup> As described in chapter V.2 point c.

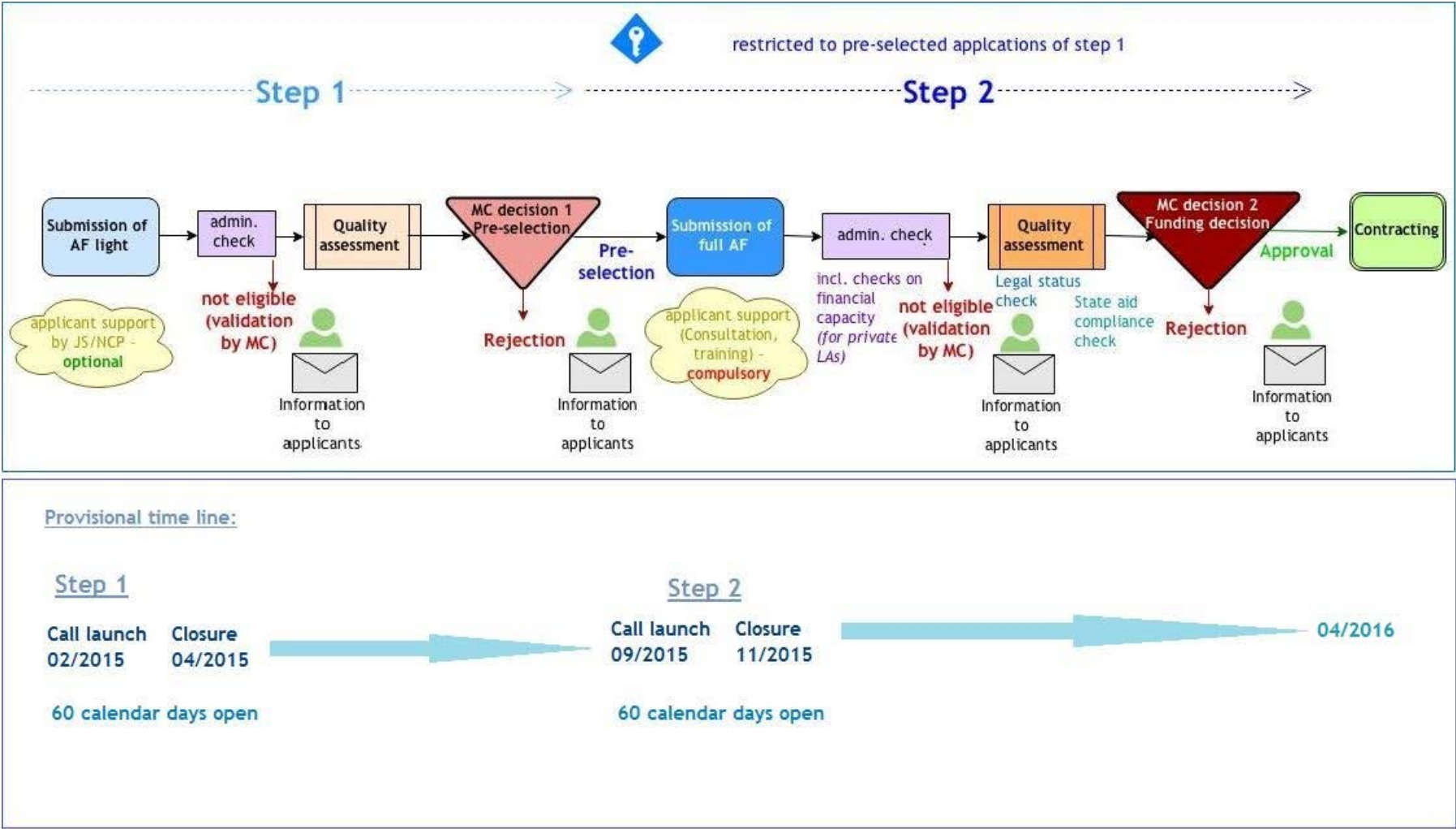
<sup>12</sup> As described in chapter V.2 point b.

<sup>13</sup> As described in chapter V.1 point b. and chapter V.2 point e.

<sup>14</sup> As described in chapter V.2 point d.

V.4. Application and assessment overview

Figure 1 - Assessment and selection procedure, communication to lead applicants



## V.5. Contracting

Should the project proposal be selected for funding by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE monitoring committee, it may have to fulfil conditions for approval before entering into contracting. In such case this will result in revisions of the submitted application form, to be carried out in the “contracting” phase. During this phase the lead applicant, in close exchange with the joint secretariat, has to make the necessary adaptations to the application form and to gather all relevant hardcopy documents within a given deadline.

### ATTENTION

*Please note that costs occurred by the partnership within the contracting phase are to be considered as covered by the lump-sum for preparation costs, paid to projects that successfully signed the subsidy contract with the MA (for further information please refer to part B chapter II.7.4). This considered, such costs cannot be claimed under project implementation costs.*

If all conditions and requirements are fulfilled, a subsidy contract between the managing authority of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme and the lead partner will be concluded. The subsidy contract shall determine the rights and responsibilities of the lead partner, the reference to the project implementation, terms of funding, requirements for reporting and financial controls, etc.

A model of the subsidy contract is available on [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

In case of approval of a project having a private body as lead partner, the lead partner will additionally be asked, before the signature of the subsidy contract, to provide proof that a valid financial guarantee, issued by a primary financial institution (bank, insurance), is in force.

The financial guarantee shall be issued for:

- ◆ The amount of the lead partner’s eligible budget (ERDF + national co-financing);
- ◆ It shall last at least until project closure - i.e. about one year after the submission of the final report.

Costs of the financial guarantee are eligible.

**Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme**

# **Application Manual**

**Version 2 (September 2015)**

**Part E: What support we offer**



# Part E

## What support we offer

### Content

<b>Part A</b>	<b>What is Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE</b>
<b>Part B</b>	<b>What projects we are looking for</b>
<b>Part C</b>	<b>How to develop a good project</b>
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<b>Part E</b>	<b>What support we offer</b>

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## I. Introduction to support offered by the programme

Providing accurate and comprehensive information, guidance and advice to applicants are key aspects for improving the quality of project applications. The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme therefore offers support in preparing project applications on the national and the transnational level during both steps of the application process.

Most of the programme support measures will be offered optionally. Only in step 2 of the call, when filling in the full application form, at least a **formal consultation** with the joint secretariat or the **participation in the transnational lead applicant training** will become mandatory. **Without attending either of this, will become ineligible (as provided for in part D, chapter V.2).**

## II. Support in preparing the application form

Please make yourself familiar with information in the application manual and other relevant documents before starting to prepare the application. For further information on relevant documents please refer to part A, chapter V.

In addition to the comprehensive application manual, support will be offered through following tools and measures.

### Programme website

The programme website [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu) is the one-stop-shop for finding thorough information related to the call. It offers answers to frequently asked questions, all relevant call documents and tools as well as a timeline, news and information on events.

The country-specific section of the programme website provides additional information on national contacts as well as on possible obligations for applicants.

### CENTRAL EUROPE Community

The CENTRAL EUROPE Community is an online platform for exchange on project ideas and to facilitate transnational partner search. It is accessible through the programme website and can be joined free-of-charge. Registered members get access to each other's contact details. They can also post new project ideas in a database or search for partners.

Through joining the programme's LinkedIn groups, potential applicants are offered an additional platform for posting and/or exchanging on project ideas as well as searching for partners.

### Helpdesk

The helpdesk provides basic information on the call procedure and can be reached by phone at +43(0)18908088-2403 or per e-mail at [helpdesk@interreg-central.eu](mailto:helpdesk@interreg-central.eu).

In addition, for any questions or problems related to the electronic monitoring system (eMS) applicants can contact the eMS technical support on +43(0)18908088-2405 or send an email to [helpdesk@interreg-central.eu](mailto:helpdesk@interreg-central.eu). See also part D chapter III.3.

## Transnational information event

The transnational information event provides basic information on the call to a transnational audience. It also serves as a platform for an early exchange on project ideas and partnerships.

The transnational information event on the first call for proposals already took place in Vienna on 1/2 July 2014. Thorough documentation of the event is available on the programme website at [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

## National information event

National information events are organised by national contact points in step 1 of the call to provide applicants with basic programme as well as call- and country-specific information. It is recommended to participate in the national event before joining the transnational lead applicant training (see below). For updates on national information events please check [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

## General guidance on national level

National contact points function as the first point of contact for applicants seeking individual guidance. In their guidance national contact points assist applicants during project idea development also providing general feedback especially related to national requirements. They also help identifying potential synergies between project ideas.

## Transnational lead applicant training

A support measure that kicks in at an advanced stage of application development is the transnational lead applicant training. The focus of this training is a step-by-step guidance on how to fill in the relevant sections of the application form. The training is a mix of theoretical plenary information and practical workshop exercises. Back-to-back with the training, applicants will also have the opportunity to present and discuss their project ideas in the frame of individual consultation with the joint secretariat.

### Step 1

The transnational lead applicant training on the light application form will take place in **Vienna on 10 March 2015**. Participation will be limited to potential lead applicants and/or experts representing them. The training will be webstreamed and consultations with the joint secretariat will be offered on the day of the event as well as on 11 March 2015, upon **prior scheduling** through the helpdesk (see below).

### Step 2

The transnational lead applicant training on the full application form will take place in Prague on 20 October 2015. Participation will be limited to lead applicants and/or experts representing them. Back-to-back with the training, consultations with the joint secretariat will be offered on the day after the event (i.e. 21 October 2015) upon prior registration. Please note that, in step 2, either attending the transnational lead applicant training or having an individual consultation with the JS (see below) will be compulsory. Attendance to the transnational lead applicant trainings will be confirmed to participants by the JS in an e-mail following the event.

For registration and updates on the transnational lead applicant trainings please check [www.interreg-central.eu](http://www.interreg-central.eu).

## Individual consultations with joint secretariat

### Step 1

Individual consultations on the project idea and partnership are offered by the joint secretariat when filling in the light application form. For this consultation project ideas should be already at a more mature phase of preparation. Such consultation is voluntary. The consultation request by the lead applicant shall be accompanied by a preliminary concept based on the project idea template (available in the CENTRAL EUROPE Community). Not more than one individual consultation per project idea will be offered and it will last a maximum of 30 minutes.

### Step 2

Individual consultations on all aspects of an application (content, financial and communication issues) are offered by the joint secretariat when filling in the full application form. Consultations are recommended as a follow-up to participation in the transnational lead applicant training for step 2. If - in step 2 - a lead applicant cannot participate in the lead applicant training, an individual consultation becomes mandatory before submitting the full application form (please see part D, chapters I and V.2 in this regard).

This consultation aims at providing technical advice focussing on the work plan and budget and will last a maximum of one hour covering all content, financial and communication issues. Not more than one individual consultation will be granted to the same project proposal and it will last a maximum of one hour (indicatively 30 minutes for content plus communication issues and 30 minutes for financial issues).

The JS will issue to the lead applicant an e-mail confirming that the individual consultation took place.

### **ATTENTION**

*Consultations in both steps will not be based on the application form as such and cannot be regarded as a pre-assessment.*

### Consultation requests

Individual consultations can take the shape of physical meetings in the offices of the joint secretariat, take place back-to-back with the lead applicant trainings or be organised as phone and/or video meetings.

Consultations with the joint secretariat will start with the launch of the call. It is recommended to avoid requesting consultations at the very last moment before the closure of the call in order to allow sufficient time for further elaborating the application (and also considering limited resources at the joint secretariat). As for step 2, consultations to project proposals will be possible until one week before the call deadline.

Slots for consultations in the JS offices as well as phone and/or video meetings have to be requested via email through the helpdesk, which can be reached at [helpdesk@interreg-central.eu](mailto:helpdesk@interreg-central.eu).

Consultations are limited in time but for questions of a more general nature the helpdesk can be addressed at any time.

Building on the above support at application stage, approved projects will also be offered continuous support through dedicated training for (lead) partners throughout project implementation. Lead partners will be briefed at project start and yearly trainings are foreseen for project, finance and communication managers.