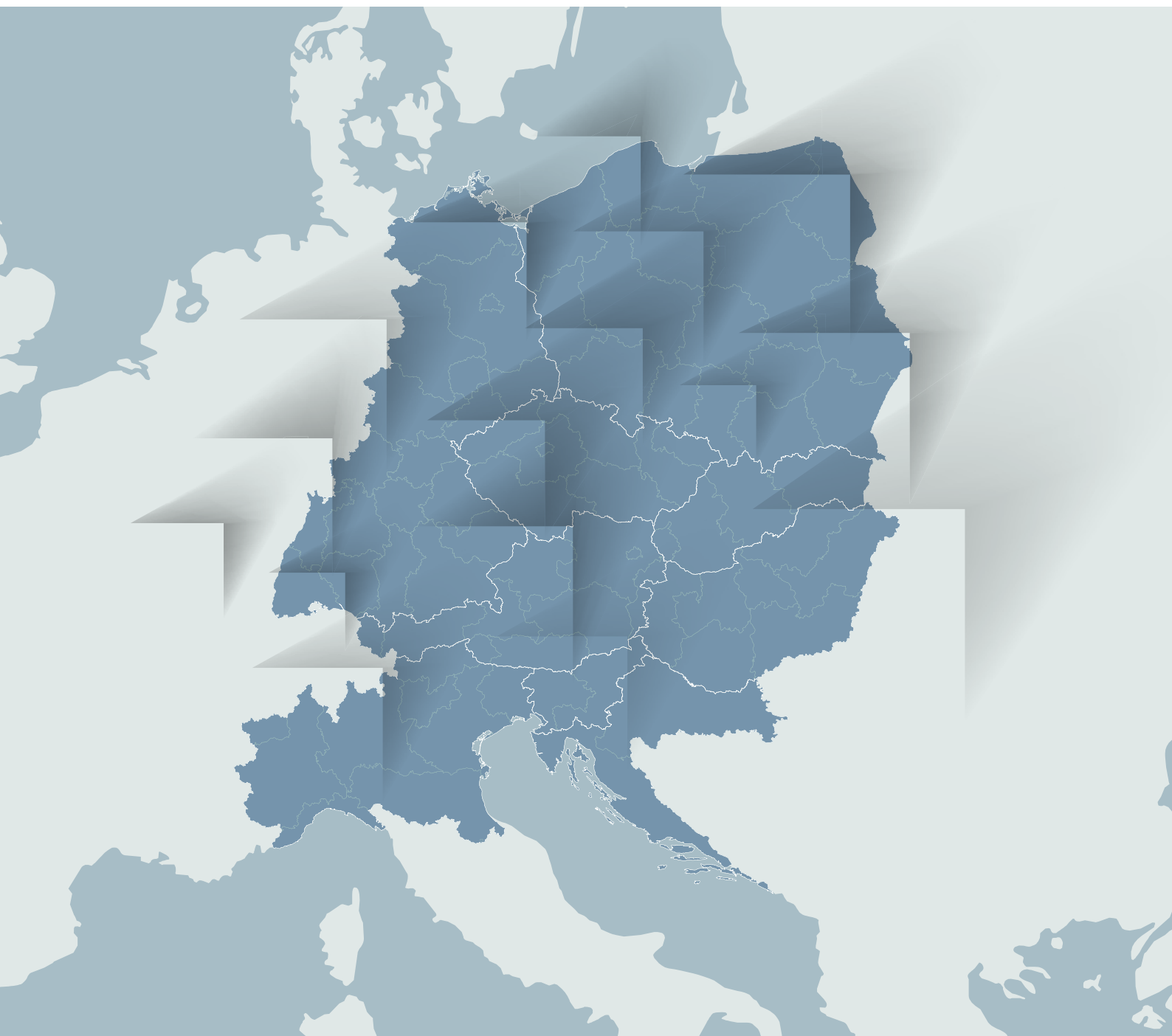


# APPLICATION MANUAL

Third Call

Version 1  
September 2017



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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



**TIP**

Please check at the programme website ([www.interreg-central.eu/projects-2007-2020](http://www.interreg-central.eu/projects-2007-2020)) on the thematically related projects already funded in the first and second call of the programme as well as by the CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013 Programme. In addition, 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.interreg-central.eu/apply](http://www.interreg-central.eu/apply).

**TIP**

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

## 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**, **considering if applicable its thematic focus for the third call (see part A chapter III and annex I of the manual)**, 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**).
- Have a look at past and current projects of CENTRAL EUROPE and other EU programmes (other Interreg programmes, LIFE+, Intelligent Energy Europe, 7<sup>th</sup> 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. 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 various opportunities for support as laid down in **part E** of the application manual.

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

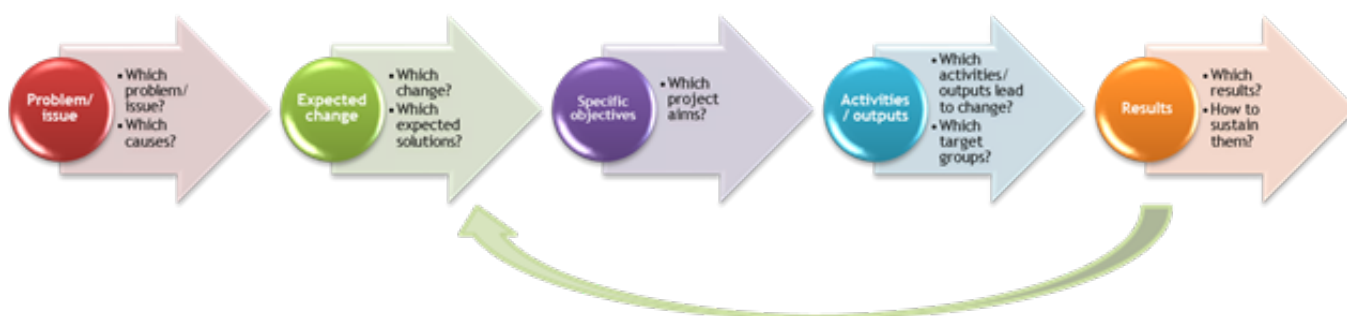
- Set a limited number of **specific objectives for your project** (not more than three). They must be specific and relevant for the programme (i.e. complying with the thematic scope of the addressed programme specific objectives considering, if applicable, its thematic focus) and the involved regions, 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. For more information, please refer to **part B chapter I.2**).
- Keep in mind that your project needs to be **innovative** (see **also part B chapter I.5**). Previous achievements and already available knowledge should be used, valorised and even further extended. Please see the tip box above on CENTRAL EUROPE thematic studies.
- Plan the **resources** (human and financial) for the project carefully. Keep in mind that:
  - ☐ Programme working language is English
  - ☐ 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 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**).
- Ensure **ownership of results** by foreseeing the direct involvement of concerned target groups and stakeholders.
- Think about the **sustainability** and uptake of your project results (for more information please refer to **part B chapter I.4**). 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. All this is strongly linked to communication.
- In view of the above, design your project **communication** work package to help sustaining your thematic outputs. Define communication activities to raise awareness and knowledge about your outputs (often through dissemination tactics) or to convince relevant stakeholders to take up an output (often through more targeted, dialogic approaches). For more information see **also chapter VI**.

### 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 has 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



#### TIP

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 project specific objectives.

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 the expected outcomes and results. These envisaged results have to reflect the desired change at territorial level and need to be translated into project specific 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.

<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).

**TIP**

In order to be funded, the project intervention logic must be coherent with the targeted specific objective of the programme considering, if applicable its thematic focus of the call (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 project 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.

### TIP

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).

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

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.

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.).

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 phase.



### What should a partnership look like?

The quality of a project depends largely on the appropriate and 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. For information on the formal partnership requirements please refer to part B chapter II.1.

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 develop and subsequently **implement the project outputs and results**. Ensure that they have the required **competences and capacities** (e.g. involve environmental authorities if you work on the development of environmental policies).
- 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, regional authorities) 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 12 partners**). Having a broad and too wide partnership should not be the goal when preparing a project.
- Ensure the **commitment of all partners from the very beginning**. In the implementation phase partner changes are to be regarded as exceptional cases, since they are 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.

### TIP

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 (available for download from [www.interreg-central.eu/implementation-documents](http://www.interreg-central.eu/implementation-documents)).

### 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 but rather encourage newcomers to participate 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.



## 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).
- The **subsidy contract** constitutes the legal framework for the implementation of the project, confirming the final ERDF commitment to the project, setting out the conditions for support and providing implementing arrangements. The most recent version of the approved application form is an integral part of the subsidy contract. The subsidy contract template is available for download on the programme website at [www.interreg-central.eu/implementation-documents](http://www.interreg-central.eu/implementation-documents)
- 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 compulsory requirements of a partnership agreement is available on the programme website in section [www.interreg-central.eu/implementation-documents](http://www.interreg-central.eu/implementation-documents). Additional provisions included in the document must in any case be in line with the programme objectives and the legal framework mentioned in the subsidy contract and the partnership agreement.

- 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 positions can be 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
<b>PROJECT MANAGER (PM)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Coordinates and manages project implementation</li> <li>&gt; Drives the partnership</li> <li>&gt; Monitors the project progress towards the set objectives and work plan as in the approved application form</li> <li>&gt; Ensures internal information flow and knowledge management</li> <li>&gt; Performs quality control of deliverables and outputs</li> <li>&gt; Prepares the activity parts of the six-monthly progress reports and ensures a timely submission</li> <li>&gt; Regularly communicates with the JS</li> <li>&gt; Coordinates closely with the finance and communication managers</li> </ul>
<b>FINANCE MANAGER (FM)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Ensures a sound financial management of the project</li> <li>&gt; Passes on relevant financial programme information (e.g. on rules and requirements regarding eligibility of costs, financial reporting, audits etc.) to all PPs</li> <li>&gt; Monitors financial project progress (including expenditure of partners and payments)</li> <li>&gt; Prepares the financial part of the six-monthly progress reports</li> <li>&gt; Is the contact person for the JS related to finances</li> <li>&gt; Works in close contact with the project manager</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNICATION MANAGER (CM)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Coordinates and manages all project communication activities (in close cooperation with PPs and the project manager)</li> <li>&gt; Builds the communication capacity of PPs</li> <li>&gt; Is the contact person for the JS related to communication</li> </ul>

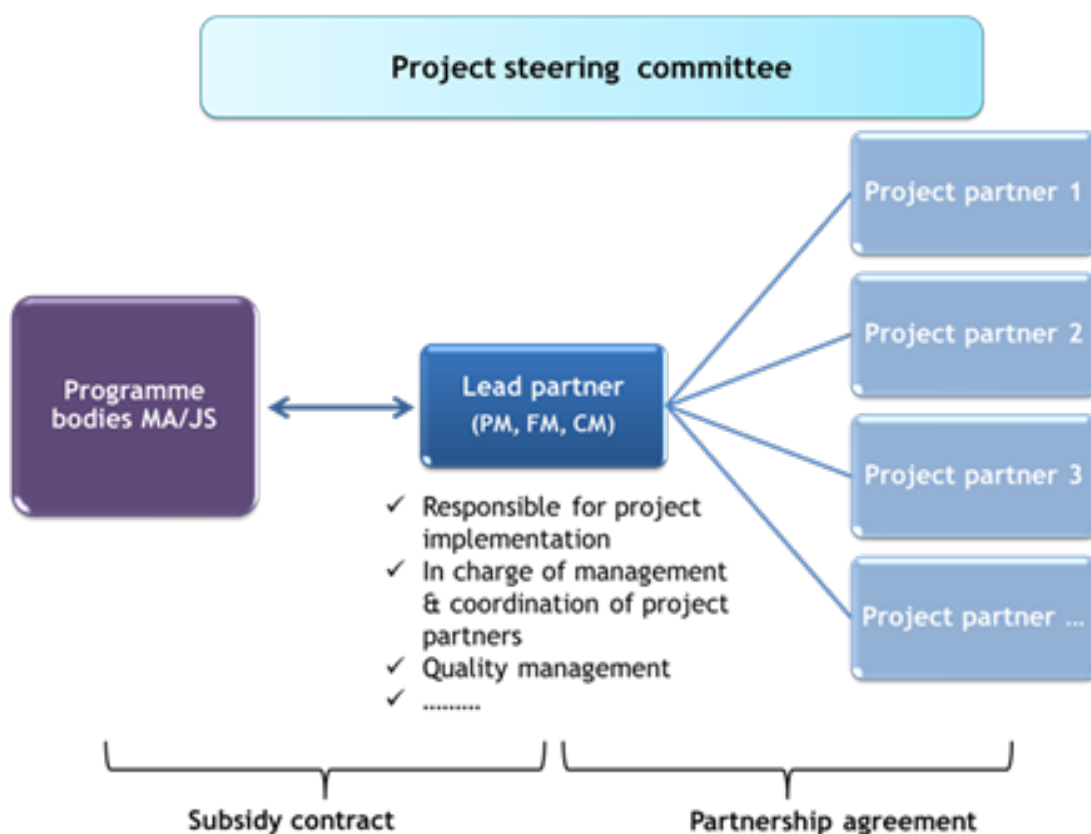
**TIP** The importance (and work load) of the project management team is not to be underestimated.

The above functions should be ideally assigned to different persons, who should work together closely. 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 partners' institutions 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 - Basic management structure of an Interreg CE project



### 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 to which the appointed JS desk officers have to be invited. 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 linked to strategic coordination, evaluation and decision making and include the following:

- **Monitoring and validation of project implementation and achievements:** This includes verifying that the project implementation is in line with activities, deliverables and outputs indicator targets defined in the approved application form. Furthermore, it means validating the quality of project outputs and the progress towards achieving set objectives.
- **Monitoring of project finances:** This includes monitoring the project budget, budget flexibility and project spending.
- **Monitoring of project communication:** This includes monitoring of the branding of the project and review of progress made towards reaching communication objectives.
- **Review of the management performance and of the quality of progress reporting** towards the programme bodies.
- **Monitoring and management of deviations.**
- If applicable, decisions on required **project modifications** (e.g. partnership, budget, activities, duration) to be requested for approval to the programme bodies.
- If applicable, discussion on project evaluation (e.g. evaluation results, follow-up measures etc.).

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 quality of project implementation, the project management team should:

- Stay in **regular contact with all project partners** (through project management platforms, emails, phone, skype etc.) in order to have a clear overview of activities that are 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.). See also chapter VI on relevant (internal) communication further below.
- Set up a proper risk management system foreseeing adequate mitigation measures.
- Closely monitor the project **progress and performance**, e.g. in terms of:
  - ☐ Progress of implementation (activities, deliverables, outputs of all work packages, indicators)
  - ☐ Finances
  - ☐ Identification of potential risks and problems, deviations and modifications
- Carefully **plan the reporting process** so that project partners provide the project management team with necessary information in time. Set up clear internal responsibilities as well as deadlines for getting partner information needed for preparing the joint progress reports.
- Perform a **systematic quality control** by checking the quality of information and supporting documents (deliverables, outputs, indicator figures, financial figures, etc.) provided by PPs in their partner reports. This should be done when consolidating the provided information into the joint progress report before submitting it to the programme bodies.
- Conduct **internal reviews** in order to analyse the current status and progress as well as to plan ahead for the next activities. This can be accomplished in the frame of regular project (steering committee) meetings.



### 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. on-going, 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 of evaluation types 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 outputs or pilot actions, project communication, etc.)
- Evaluation of effects of project results on different target groups and stakeholders (e.g. satisfaction analysis)
- 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 appraisal** by expert or advisory boards (e.g. involving also associated partners and/or key stakeholders for thematic assessment of outputs and results)

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

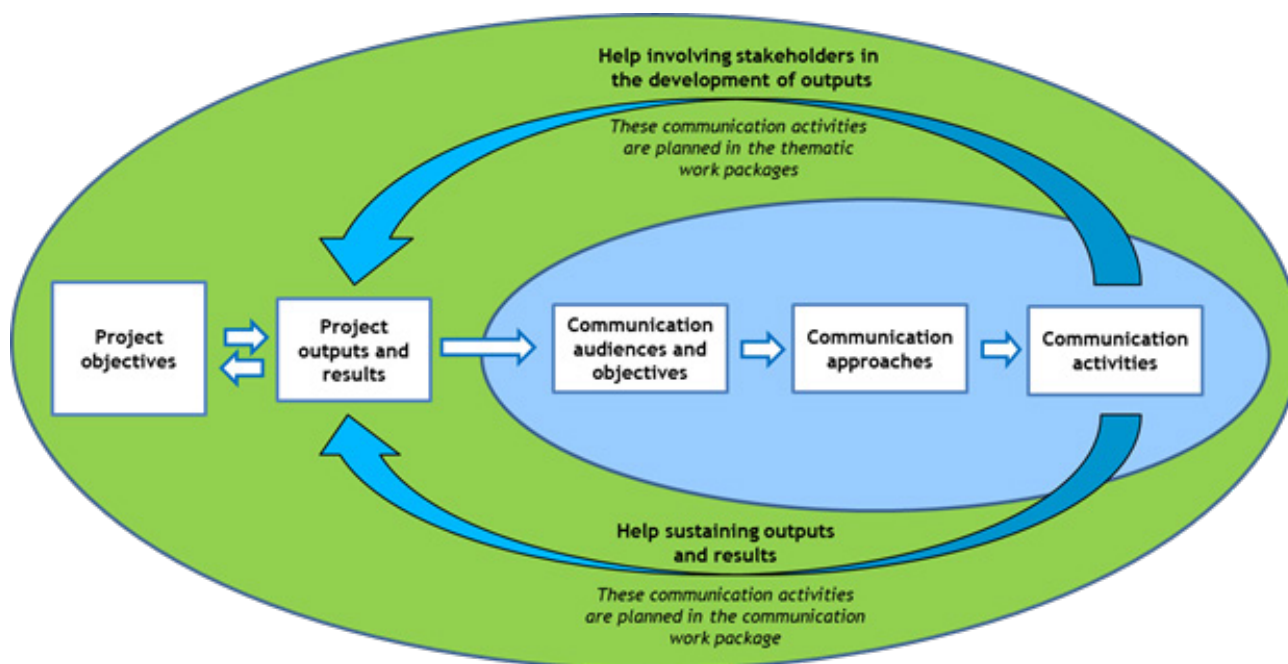
Please refer to chapter A.2.3 of the implementation manual for further guidance on evaluation principles, criteria and methods.

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

## VI. Designing relevant project communication

Communication plays an important role throughout transnational cooperation projects. To achieve the strategically defined change (see chapter III on project intervention logic), creating simply a set of outputs in a closed partnership - without ensuring external involvement and sustainability - will not be enough.

Interreg CE projects will have to ensure the proper involvement of stakeholders in the development of outputs and to ensure the sustainability of the outputs. Getting these two tasks right strongly depends on proper communication on various levels of the project. See also the visualisation of the communication process below.



### Communication to ensure involvement of project partners and stakeholders

Communication contributes to trustful cooperation within a project. Interreg CE project managers will have to ensure that all project partners stay informed and involved from beginning to end, e.g. through establishing digital exchange platforms or organising partner meetings. Such **internal communication measures** will have to be planned in the **management work package**.

In addition, to successfully create outputs and results, projects will often have to cooperate with stakeholders from outside the partnership. Thematic work package leaders will thus have to ensure the involvement of target audiences by regular communicating with these, e.g. through stakeholder workshops. Such **involvement-related measures** will have to be planned in **thematic work packages**. Obviously, close links exist to the sustainability-focused communication work package (see below). Therefore, thematic work package leaders should work together closely with the communication manager of the project.

## TIP

Carefully think about what you want to achieve with your project communication. Plan it in the correct work package:

- If you want to **involve project partners** to achieve your project outputs, communication activities should be planned in the **management work package**.
- If you want to **involve target groups and other stakeholders including associated partners** to achieve your project outputs, communication activities should be planned in the **thematic work packages**.
- If you want to communicate and thus **sustain achieved project outputs**, activities should be planned in the **communication work package**.

## Communication to ensure sustainability of outputs and results

Outputs and results of Interreg CE projects are hardly ever an end in itself but rather serve as inspiration for stakeholders that were not involved in their development. Project communication managers will therefore have to ensure that project outputs are known and used outside the partnership through communication. Such **sustainability-related communication will have to be planned in the communication work package**.

## Relevant communication is dissemination plus engagement

Whatever the focus of communication is (involvement or sustainability), relevant communication tactics usually have to go beyond the simple dissemination of information. Disseminating information will raise the awareness and knowledge about what the project does among certain target audiences but it will usually fall short of changing their attitudes and behaviour towards project activities and outputs.

Only trustful relationships will allow a project to influence a target audience's attitude or behaviour towards what the project does - no matter whether they are entrepreneurs, researchers, policy makers or decision makers. By directly addressing and getting into dialogue with partners and stakeholders, communication helps building these important relationships between the project and its target audiences.

More information on how to concretely plan your Interreg CE project communication is provided in part D, IV.2.4.2 of the application manual 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 joined the harmonised Interreg branding initiative**, in which most Interreg programmes cooperate to increase the awareness of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) as a valuable objective of EU cohesion policy.

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

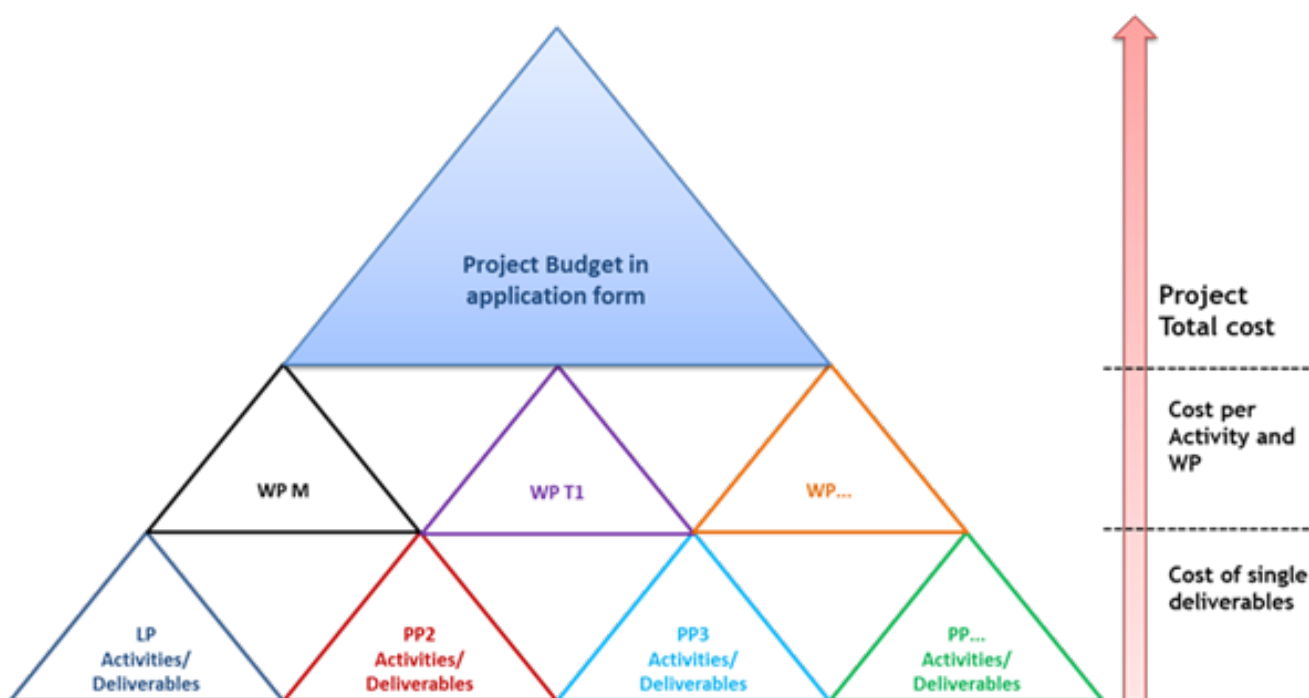
As a consequence, **all project logos will be aligned with the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme logo**. This shared branding will offer direct benefits including an increased recognisability on the ground, helping projects to reach shared objectives from attracting relevant stakeholders in the regions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

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 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 in thematic work packages for self-standing outputs that are expected to be marketed after the project. 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.).

## VII. Designing a sound project budget

The budget of the project must be drafted following the real cost principle<sup>2</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/apply](http://www.interreg-central.eu/apply)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</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>3</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.

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 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.