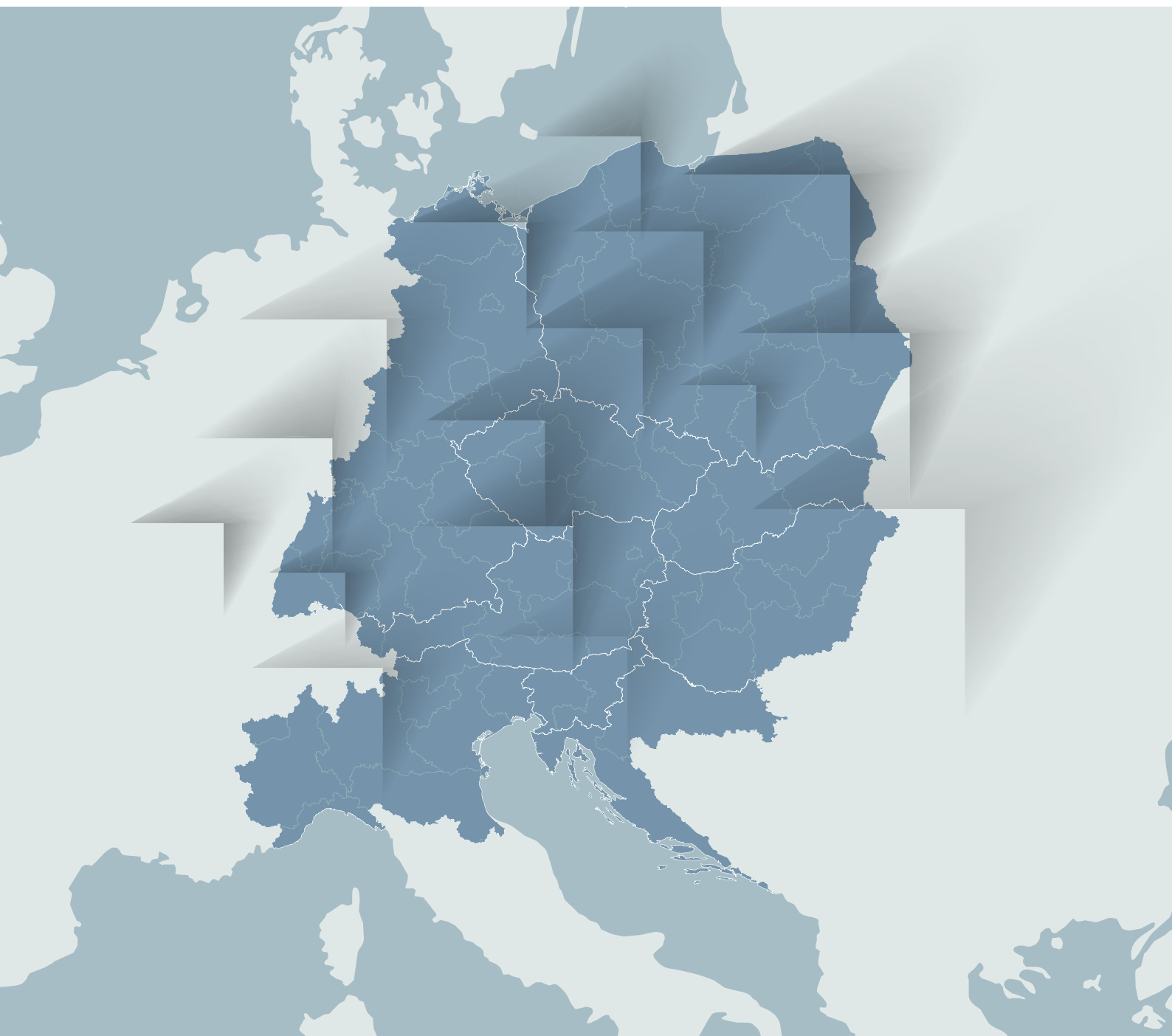


ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE THIRD CALL FOR PROPOSALS

21 September 2017



I. ANNOUNCEMENT

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) Programme invites public and private organisations in central European regions to submit applications to the third call for proposals. Detailed conditions and the timeline for the call can be found in the “Application manual - Third Call” included in the “Application package - Third Call”. The application package constitutes an integral part of this call announcement and is available at www.interreg-central.eu/apply.

2. OBJECTIVES

The Interreg CE Programme is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation objective (ETC) of the EU Cohesion Policy, for the programming period 2014-2020.

The Interreg CE Programme supports regional cooperation among nine central European countries. The overall objective of the programme is “to cooperate beyond borders to make central European cities and regions better places to live and work” by implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low-carbon economy, environment, culture and transport.

The programme runs from 2014 to 2020 and invests EUR 231 million to co-finance transnational cooperation projects promoted by public and private organisations from central European regions. Projects supported shall deliver concrete and visible outputs and results in response to well-identified challenges of the programme area and addressing development needs in an integrated manner. Projects focussing on purely academic cooperation or basic research or aiming at mere networking and exchanging of experience and/or not demonstrating the translation of outputs arising from “soft” actions (surveys, studies, etc.) into concrete and sustainable results will not be supported by the Interreg CE Programme.

The Interreg CE “Cooperation Programme” document in its latest version (Version 2.0) constitutes the legal basis for this call for proposals and is available at <http://interreg-central.eu/cooperation-programme>

3. PROGRAMME AREA

The CENTRAL EUROPE programme area includes all regions from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as eight Länder from Germany (Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt and Thüringen) and nine regions from Italy (Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma di Trento, Valle d’Aosta and Veneto).

4. THEMATIC FOCUS OF THE CALL

Within the third call, proposals can be submitted under all 4 priority axes, however certain programme specific objectives (SO) within the priority axes 1, 2 and 3 will be focused on pre-defined thematic topics. Furthermore, it is not possible to submit proposals under SO 2.3 “Improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO2 emissions”.

For a general description of contents of each priority axis and programme SO, including information on possible actions, beneficiaries and target groups, please refer to section 2 of the Interreg CE “Cooperation Programme” document in its latest version.

For specific information on the thematic focus of the call at the level of each SO, please refer to the tables in the following pages (3 to 5) as well as to Part A of the application manual for the third call. More information on the thematic scope

of each SO including examples of supported actions is provided in annex I of the manual. Annexes II and III present the programme intervention logic and types/examples of outputs.

Under the terms of this call, a project proposal must focus on only one priority axis and one SO.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to check the already approved projects in the respective thematic areas to avoid duplication and make use of synergies. More information on projects approved within previous calls, as well as on projects funded by the predecessor CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013 Programme, can be found at www.interreg-central.eu/projects2007-2020

Thematic focus of the third call - INNOVATION

PRIORITY AXIS (PA)	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE (SO)	THEMATIC FOCUS
Cooperating on INNOVATION to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive	1.1 To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity in central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Bottom-up implementation of smart specialisation strategies (RIS3) in industrial sectors that are technology priority areas in central Europe¹ • Triple and quadruple helix approaches to strengthen the participation of public and civil society actors (in particular RIS3 key actors) • Innovative practices such as open innovation and co-creation approaches involving e.g. the creative sector (overlaps with SO 3.2 targeting cultural and creative industries have to be avoided). • Actions for bringing innovation closer to the market such as financing mechanisms for market introduction and leverage of innovation
	1.2 To improve skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Social innovation and integration of disadvantaged groups and regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottom-up social innovation practices creating and strengthening support infrastructure, services and schemes (e.g. mentoring, community-owned initiatives, services of general interest) • Integration of migrants and other disadvantaged groups into society and the labour market • Innovation of social policies (e.g. tackling policy-related challenges, policy improvements and coordination) • Development of entrepreneurial competences for social entrepreneurship (including entrepreneurship of migrants) and entrepreneurship aiming to create positive social effects

¹ Energy and environment, Public health, medicine and life sciences, Agro- and bio-economy, Advanced materials and nanotechnology, Transport and mobility, Advanced manufacturing systems, ICT and electronics - see http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/20182/81824/S3-CE_160926_report.pdf/491bbef6-7610-4960-a74c-b58a57a0c9f4. Projects are encouraged to address also multiple sectors under broader headings such as circular economy.

Thematic focus of the third call - LOW CARBON STRATEGIES

PRIORITY AXIS (PA)	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE (SO)	THEMATIC FOCUS
Cooperating on LOW-CARBON strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE	2.1 To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructure other than public buildings and streetlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport infrastructure including railway, road, waterways, terminals etc. (<i>overlaps with Priority Axis 4 have to be avoided</i>) • Water infrastructure including distribution and maintenance of water supply • Waste and waste water infrastructure including collection and treatment • ICT infrastructure including data storage and distribution systems > Financing aspects of energy-efficient renovation, e.g. considering investment and operational costs or financial savings during the operation phase (exclusively related to above listed types of public infrastructure) > Integration of renewable energy sources (exclusively related to above listed types of public infrastructure)
	2.2 To improve territorially based low-carbon energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > No thematic focus, all topics can be addressed as described in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme - Version 2.0 (available here)
	2.3 To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO ₂ emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Remains closed because topics are already sufficiently covered by projects. No project proposals can be submitted in this specific objective.

Thematic focus of the third call - NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

PRIORITY AXIS (PA)	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE (SO)	THEMATIC FOCUS
Cooperating on NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE	3.1 To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > No thematic focus, all topics can be addressed as described in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme - Version 2.0 (available here)
	3.2 To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Cultural and creative industries (CCI) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCI entrepreneurship • CCI policies • cross-sectorial cooperation and linkages of CCI to other sectors or innovative technologies
	3.3 To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > No thematic focus, all topics can be addressed as described in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme - Version 2.0 (available here)

Thematic focus of the third call - TRANSPORT

PRIORITY AXIS (PA)	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE (SO)	THEMATIC FOCUS
Cooperating on TRANSPORT to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE	4.1 To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport system for better connections to national and European transport networks	> No thematic focus, all topics can be addressed as described in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme - Version 2.0 (available here)
	4.2 To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multi-modal environmentally-friendly freight solutions	> No thematic focus, all topics can be addressed as described in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme - Version 2.0 (available here)

5. ERDF BUDGET AVAILABLE

The programme will allocate around 60m EUR ERDF to the third call for proposals. An indicative ERDF allocation to the four programme priority axes is presented in the following table. When deciding for project funding, such allocation may be adapted by the monitoring committee according to programme needs.

PRIORITY AXIS	INDICATIVE ERDF ALLOCATION (m EUR)
PRIORITY 1 Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive	20
PRIORITY 2 Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE	10
PRIORITY 3 Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE	20
PRIORITY 4 Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE	10
TOTAL	60

6. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

The third call for proposals of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is organised according to a one-step procedure. Project proposals must be submitted in English language and only through the web-based electronic monitoring system (eMS) on <https://ems.interreg-central.eu>. The application package for the third call contains also the off-line template of application form (for information purposes only).

7. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

In the framework of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, eligible applicants are:

- National, regional and local public bodies (including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013);
- Private institutions, including private companies, having legal personality;
- International organisations acting under the national law of any CENTRAL EUROPE Member State or, with restrictions, under international law²

It is to be noted that international organisations acting under national law of any country outside the CENTRAL EUROPE area are not eligible for funding by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

8. PARTNERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Projects supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme must involve in the partnership:

- at least three financing partners,
- from at least three countries and
- being at least two of the partners located in CENTRAL EUROPE regions.

Applicants located outside the programme area but within the EU can also apply for funding as project partners. Please note that ERDF allocated to a single project for such partners, together with the ERDF spent outside the programme area, cannot exceed 20 % of the total ERDF contribution to such project. The involvement of partners from EU regions outside the programme area shall bring a clear benefit to the regions of the programme area. Their involvement is considered as exceptional and must be duly justified.

Applicants can also be located outside the EU, but they will not receive ERDF funding from the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

9. ELIGIBLE LEAD APPLICANTS

The following institutions can be lead applicants:

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

² It is to be noted that international organisations acting under national law of any country outside the CENTRAL EUROPE area are not eligible for funding by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

Only institutions located in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme area (or meeting the requirements of “assimilated partners”³) can apply as lead applicants.

Private lead applicants have to comply with obligatory financial capacity requirements detailed in part D, chapter V.1 of the application manual.

Proposals submitted by private lead applicants not meeting the necessary financial capacity criteria will be rejected. Private lead applicants should therefore carefully check their ability to fulfil the applicable financial capacity criteria before submitting their proposal.

10. PROJECT SIZE

The recommended financial size of projects to be submitted in the framework of the third call for proposals is in the range of 1m to 5m EUR total cost. In exceptional cases, smaller or larger projects can be supported.

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.

11. CO-FINANCING RATES

The following co-financing rates apply:

- Up to 85 % for applicants of Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia;
- Up to 80 % for applicants of Austria, Germany, Italy;
- Up to 80 % for applicants located in EU regions outside the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme area.

In case of EGTCs covering geographical areas in which different co-financing rates apply, the co-financing rate applicable to the EGTC is the one of the country in which it is registered.

In case applicants intend to implement activities considered as State aid relevant, the maximum grant will be calculated applying the de minimis regime while respecting the co-financing percentages listed above. Should the activities to be carried out by EU-partners from outside the CENTRAL EUROPE area be considered as State aid relevant, the participation of these partners will 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.

12. PROJECT DURATION

In the framework of the third call for proposals, the recommended project duration is from 24 to a maximum of 36 months, taking into account that **the latest possible end date for a project is 31 December 2021.**

³ 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 and carry out activities which are for the benefit of the regions in the programme area.

13. AWARD CRITERIA

The selection of proposals is based on the assessment of received applications following a standardised procedure, which safeguards the principles of transparency and equal treatment.

Following a formal/administrative compliance check and - in case of private lead applicants - a lead applicant financial capacity check, each proposal passing these checks is assessed on its contents. The four strategic and operational assessment criteria against which eligible proposals are assessed are:

1. RELEVANCE
2. PARTNERSHIP
3. IMPLEMENTATION
4. BUDGET

Each criterion is composed of one or more sub-criteria, which are assessed according to scores from 1 to 5. The full list of assessment sub-criteria is available in part D, chapter V.1, point e) of the application manual for the third call.

PLEASE NOTE

Proposals not showing an adequate quality regarding the following two sub-criteria of criterion 1 "Relevance" will not be further assessed against other criteria and will be rejected:

- 1.1 - "Intervention logic and transnationality"
- 1.2 - "Policy and territorial relevance"

Decisions on project selection will be taken by the monitoring committee of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme at the level of each priority axis, on the basis of the results of the assessment.

For further information on the whole assessment process, including contracting, please refer to part D, chapter V of the application manual for the third call.

14. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Project proposals must be submitted by the lead applicant through the eMS at the latest by **Thursday, 25 January 2018 at 18:00 CET**.

15. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

More details about the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, conditions for the submission of project proposals, the assessment of proposals, the application package and other relevant information is available at: www.interreg-central.eu/apply

It is also possible to contact representatives of the National Contact Points located in each CENTRAL EUROPE Member State or the Joint Secretariat based in Vienna. Contact information is available on the programme website.