

FOURTH CALL FOR PROPOSALS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

Authorities and stakeholders at local and regional level have a vital role to play in the achievement of the EU's strategies for growth, jobs and sustainable development. The exchange, sharing and transfer of policy experience, knowledge and good practices contribute to the success of this objective.

The INTERREG IVC programme is part of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective of the Structural Funds policies for the period 2007-2013. It aims, by means of interregional cooperation, to **improve the effectiveness of regional development policies** and contribute to economic modernisation and increased competitiveness of Europe, by:

- enabling local and regional actors across the EU to exchange their experiences and knowledge;
- matching regions less experienced in a certain policy field with more advanced regions;
- ensuring the transfer of good practices into Structural Funds mainstream programmes.

The INTERREG IVC programme is financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), whose principles and regulations are laid down in Council Regulation N° 1083/2006 (General Regulation), Council and Parliament Regulation N° 1080/2006 (ERDF Regulation) and Commission Regulation N° 1828/2006 (Implementation Regulation). The principles and regulations for projects developed within the programme are laid down in the Operational Programme, which was officially approved by the European Commission on 11th September 2007.

2. ELIGIBLE AREA

The eligible INTERREG IVC cooperation area covers the whole territory of the European Union with its 27 Member States, including insular and outermost areas. In addition, Norway and Switzerland are full members of the programme and organisations from these countries are welcome to participate in it. Partners from other countries can participate at their own costs.

3. TIMING OF THE CALL

The fourth call for proposals opens on **1 December 2010** and closes on **1 April 2011**.

4. PRIORITIES

The INTERREG IVC programme is divided into two thematic priorities related to the EU strategy for growth and sustainable development known as the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies. Applicants are invited to submit their project application under one of the sub-themes listed below.

PRIORITY 1 – INNOVATION & THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY	PRIORITY 2 – ENVIRONMENT & RISK PREVENTION
- Innovation, Research & Technology Development	- Natural & Technological Risks, Climate change
- Entrepreneurship and SMEs	- Water Management
- Information Society	- Waste Prevention and Management
- Employment, Human Resources and Education	- Biodiversity and Natural Heritage, Air quality
	- Energy and Sustainable Transport
	- Cultural Heritage and Landscape

Further information on the programme priorities and sub-themes can be found in the Operational Programme and annex 1 of the programme manual.

5. TYPES OF INTERVENTION

The fourth call is **open only to Regional Initiative Projects, excluding mini-programmes**. A detailed description of this type of intervention is provided in section 2.1.1 of the programme manual. **Applications for Capitalisation Projects and mini-programmes will not be accepted.**

6. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT: THE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Based on the experience gained from the previous calls and further to the recommendations of the programme evaluation, an additional requirement is set for the fourth call projects in terms of outputs to be produced within component 3. In order to optimise the results of the policy exchange of experience, each 'region' participating in the cooperation will have to produce an 'implementation plan'. The aim is to go beyond the requirement of a final document like a good practice guide or a policy recommendation paper (which usually remain at project level) by focusing on a more specific output at 'partner' level.

The implementation plan is defined as a document that specifies how each 'region' participating in the cooperation will work to integrate the lessons learnt from the cooperation into its local / regional or, if relevant, national policies. This plan should describe the future actions planned to ensure that the benefits of the exchange of experience are not lost after the project ends. Examples of these actions could include: - local meetings to mobilise relevant stakeholders and to prepare bids to be submitted in local/regional/national programmes; - launch of new initiatives in the region; - measures to modify a specific policy document/instrument. The plan could also include information on the results already achieved during the project lifetime if relevant. The implementation plan should contribute to better ensure the durability of the project results.

No specific format or template for the implementation plan is provided by the programme so it is up to each project / region to set it up according to its needs and characteristics. The implementation plan reflects the intent of the regions and shall not be considered as a binding document. Nevertheless, partners are encouraged to gain the necessary commitments to the plan into action.

This new requirement is reflected in the fourth call application form through the addition of a compulsory output indicator in component 3 (section 3.3.1). When calculating the value of this indicator, applicants need to consider that the number of implementation plans may not necessarily correspond to the number of partners. For example, if the same region/territory is represented by more than one organisation (e.g. a public authority together with its development agency), only one joint implementation plan for this region is expected from these two bodies. There may be also cases where one of the proposed partners is involved in the proposal not representing a 'region' but as an organisation whose specialised knowledge and competences (e.g. in terms of communication and dissemination or exchange of experience) are required for the success of the project. In such a case, the concerned organisation will not have to elaborate an implementation plan.

The implementation plans will have to be submitted to the programme at the end of the project, therefore **an abstract of each implementation plan will have to be available in English.**

7. INNOVATIVE CHARACTER OF THE APPLICATION

Since the programme has already approved 122 projects, the innovative character of the applications submitted in the fourth call will be of special importance. Therefore, authorities interested in this call are warmly invited to check the characteristics of these projects on the 'Approved projects database' on the programme website: www.interreg4c.eu

In case of similarities with approved projects, applicants will need to precisely explain in their application form the differences but also the possible synergies of their proposals with these projects. The similarities can be related to the topic tackled by the proposal but they can also be related to the partners involved in the cooperation. The innovative character of fourth call applications will need to be clearly demonstrated at both levels.

An analysis of the current thematic and geographical coverage of the programme is also available as part of the external evaluation, available on the programme website under 'Programme > Programme evaluation'.

8. PROJECT DURATION

Decisions on fourth call applications are expected to be taken by the end of 2011. The applicants should therefore be ready to start their project in **January 2012**.

Since all activities within the projects must be completed and costs paid before the end of 2014 (see also section 2.4.1 of the programme manual), **the fourth call projects will last a maximum of 36 months (project closure included) without any possibility of extension of duration.**

9. PARTNERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

9.1 WHO CAN APPLY?

Only public authorities and bodies governed by public law are eligible. According to Directive 2004/18/EC, Article 1, a body governed by public law means any body:

- (a) established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
- (b) having legal personality; and
- (c) - financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law;
- or subject to management supervision by those bodies;
- or having an administrative, managerial or supervisory.

Only “official partners” (those listed in the application form, also called “contributing partners”) can incur costs and receive ERDF. It is therefore not possible to participate with a “sub-partner” status.

As indicated in the Operational Programme and programme manual, applications from national, regional or local authorities, or partnerships having at least a solid and relevant participation of regional and local authorities in them, will be considered with priority in the selection process. In order to maximise the impact of this programme on regional and local policies across the EU, applicants are strongly encouraged to include the relevant and competent public authorities in their application.

9.2 GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

In order to be eligible, the applications submitted in the fourth call will have to ensure that the two following requirements are met:

- **at least one partner from each of the four Information Point areas** (see point 14 below) is represented in the partnership,
- **at least one of the twelve most recent EU Member States** is represented in the partnership (i.e. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia).

10. FINANCIAL SIMPLIFICATION

In order to simplify the reporting of **administration** costs, a flat rate has been introduced for projects to be approved under the fourth call.¹ This will simplify the reporting and first level control and audits of administration costs as no supporting evidence is required to back up the reported administration cost amount.

In the application form for the fourth call, the administration budget is now automatically calculated as 12% of the budgeted staff costs. **The same single fixed rate for administration costs (12% of staff costs) applies to all partners in all states participating in the INTERREG IVC programme.**

For the budgeting (and later reporting) of staff costs, and the costs under the other budget lines, the real cost principle continues to apply. Further explanation of this financial simplification is available in the programme manual section 2.4.2.2.

¹ In compliance with Article 7(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 as amended by Regulation (EC) No 397/2009 and subject to the positive outcome of the EC's ex-ante assessment of the proposed method.

11. FUNDING AVAILABLE AND CO-FINANCING RATE

The remaining available ERDF budget for projects is allocated to the fourth call for proposals. This ERDF budget amounts to approximately **EUR 100 million** (around EUR 62 million for priority 1 and 38 million for priority 2).

Under the INTERREG IVC programme, the eligible project activities are co-financed by the ERDF at a rate of either 75% or 85% depending on the Member State. Partners from Norway and Switzerland are not eligible to receive ERDF but can receive co-financing from their respective national funds. The Norwegian funds are provided directly through the programme and the co-financing rate amounts to 50%. Swiss partners should refer to the Swiss National Contact Point in order to know more about the availability of Swiss funds.

Co-financing rate/funding	Participating States (EU + Norway)
75% ERDF	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom
85% ERDF	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia
50% National Funds	Norway

12. APPLICATION PROCESS

The application pack of the fourth call is available on the programme website (www.interreg4c.eu) and includes the following documents:

- the present terms of reference,
- the programme manual,
- the application form,
- the application form technical requirements,
- the co-financing statement template.

Project applicants who would like to submit a proposal must complete an application form in English, as it is the working language of the programme. Applications submitted in another language will be considered ineligible.

The application form is an Excel document, programmed with a number of automatic links and formulae. These features ensure that error messages appear in the form if it is not properly filled in. Applications submitted with error messages will be declared ineligible. Detailed instructions on how to fill in the application form are provided in the form itself and in the accompanying notice of the application form technical requirements. All the relevant information is available on the programme's website: www.interreg4c.eu

The application form has to be submitted electronically by e-mail to:

application@interreg4c.eu

at the latest by **1 April 2011**. Similarly the original, unbound hard copy hand signed, stamped (if exists) and dated (as per postal stamp or equivalent proof) has to be sent at the latest by the same date to the following address only:

**INTERREG IVC
4th call for proposals
Les Arcuriales - Entrée D - 5e étage
45 rue de Tournai
59000 LILLE
FRANCE**

The electronic version and paper version of the application form must be identical. The original paper version of the application form must also include the signed co-financing statements from all partners including that of the Lead Partner (originals or copies).

Further requirements are outlined in point 13 below and in section 3.4.1 (eligibility criteria) of the programme manual.

13. SELECTION PROCESS

All applications will be subject to a two-step assessment procedure. Applications will initially be checked against the following eligibility criteria.

Fourth call eligibility criteria
1. Has the application form been <u>submitted in due time</u> in original and electronic versions, both versions being identical? Is a proof of sending provided (postal stamp or equivalent)?
2. Is the <u>application complete</u> and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the application form (original)? - the co-financing statements for the Lead Partner and each partner (originals or copies)?
3. Is the <u>application form dated and hand signed and fully and properly filled</u> in according to the instructions (no error messages appear in the document)?
4. <u>Are all co-financing statements correct?</u> Are they signed and dated (they should also be stamped and printed on headed letter paper if available)? Is the name of the partner mentioned identical to the institution name mentioned in the application form? Does the sum stated in the statement at least cover the “national co-financing” amount (or the “total amount” in case of partners not applying for INTERREG IVC co-financing) indicated in the application form? Is the standard form included in the application pack used and, besides the fields to be filled, have no amendments been made to the text?
5. Does the project partnership include <u>at least one partner from each IP area</u> ?
6. Does the project partnership include <u>at least one new EU Member State</u> ?

The eligibility assessment is a ‘yes or no’ process. This means that the eligibility assessment does not allow any flexibility in the way the criteria are applied. Applications that do not meet all the eligibility criteria will not be considered further.

Eligible applications will be subject to **quality assessment** according to six selection criteria which are further detailed in annex 4 of the programme manual:

- Content-related criteria
 - Criterion 1 - Relevance of the proposal
 - Criterion 2 - Coherence of the proposal and quality of approach
 - Criterion 3 - Quality of results
- Implementation-related criteria
 - Criterion 4 - Quality of management
 - Criterion 5 - Quality of partnership
 - Criterion 6 - Budget and finance

Based on the results of the quality assessment, final decisions are made by the Monitoring Committee of the programme, which is made up of representatives from both national and regional authorities within the participating states. They are communicated to all Lead Partners via a notification letter.

14. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) - which supports the Nord-Pas de Calais Region, Managing Authority of the programme - is based in Lille, France. The JTS is in charge of the overall implementation of the programme (development, assessment, monitoring, auditing). The JTS works closely with four Information Points located across Europe. They provide assistance to applicants and organise events to promote the programme. They also support the network of national and regional contact points. Applicants are invited to get in contact with their respective Information Point depending on their location (see table below).

Information Point	Geographical Area
North (Rostock, Germany) IP-North@interreg4c.eu	Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden
East (Katowice, Poland) IP-East@interreg4c.eu	Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia
South (Valencia, Spain) IP-South@interreg4c.eu	Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain
West (Lille, France) IP-West@interreg4c.eu	Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom

Full details of the support offered to applicants is available on www.interreg4c.eu

15. FURTHER INFORMATION

A comprehensive description of the programme's strategies and priorities, together with a socio-economic analysis of Europe are included in the INTERREG IVC Operational Programme.

Further guidance for project applicants is provided in the programme manual which is available on the programme website. All official documents and contact details of the programme JTS and the Information Points are also available on the programme website:

www.interreg4c.eu