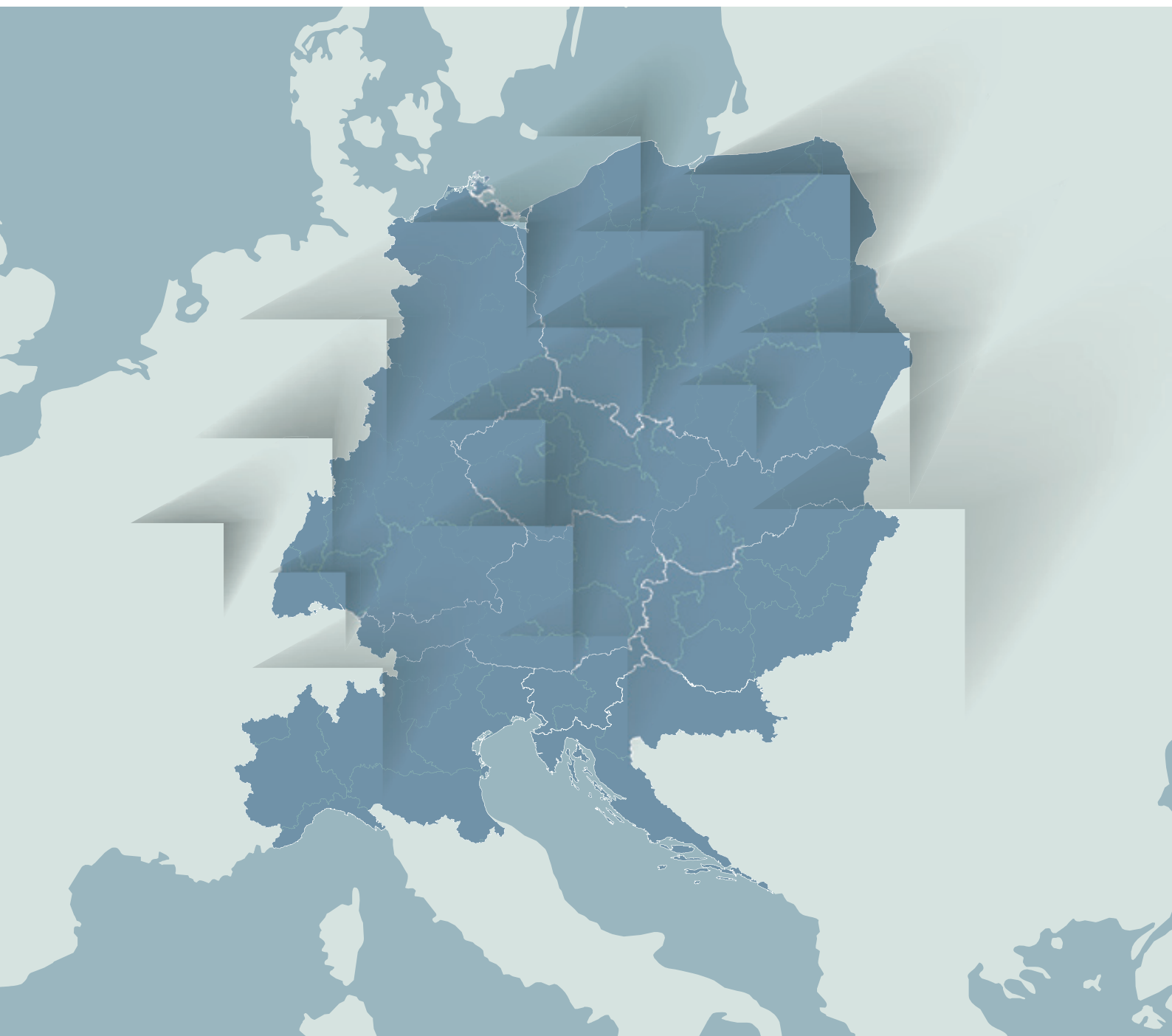


APPLICATION MANUAL FOR THE FOURTH CALL

Capitalisation through coordination

Version 1
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1. Introduction

Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE is a Cohesion Policy programme funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation objective.

The key elements of the programme (incl. the cooperation area, contents of its funding priorities, eligible applicants, programme budget, management structures and more) are described in detail in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme document, available for download from <http://interreg-central.eu/documents> (section “Programme Documents”).

After three calls for proposals, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme already allocated the large majority of its funds to 129 projects. 85 projects were selected for funding in the first two calls and they are already delivering relevant outputs and results that are strengthening cohesion in central European regions and beyond. 44 additional projects were funded in the third call and will start their implementation in spring 2019.

Member States participating in the programme decided to dedicate the fourth call to the **exploitation of outputs and results**, which are being delivered by projects funded within the first two calls. The overall goal of the call is to **increase the impact** of transnational cooperation in the central European regions. To this end, the call will be experimental and test new approaches to the so-called “capitalisation” of project results. Furthermore, it will introduce a **new way to coordinate** between different EU-funded programmes on the ground.

This experimental call has an **indicative ERDF allocation of 10 million EUR**, which is subject to availability (please refer to the call announcement).

This document informs potential applicants about requirements that apply to the fourth call and provides guidance for the submission of proposals.

In addition to this application manual, potential applicants should also refer to the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Implementation Manual for complementary information. It is available for download from www.interreg-central.eu/documents (section “Implementation Documents”).

The Implementation Manual contains further relevant information, for instance, on: the applicable legal framework; programme output and result indicators; communication and branding; procurement of services and goods; State aid; financial provisions (e.g. national control systems, eligibility of expenditure, budget line specifications, etc.).

2. What is the fourth call about? Exploitation and coordination

2.1. Exploitation of outputs and results

Exploitation approaches

With the fourth call, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme intends to facilitate the exploitation of transnational project outputs and results, in order to increase their impacts in central European regions.

In the context of the fourth call, exploitation is any action that makes use of promising outputs and results already achieved by previously funded projects in the concerned central European regions. Exploitation therefore aims at increasing impacts and it goes beyond a mere duplication of existing outputs and results. Project outputs and results shall be further developed and tailored to the needs of the regions and target groups that will make further use of them.

Projects funded within the fourth call shall exploit transnational outputs and results by following two different approaches:

- **Upstreaming:** Existing outputs and results are taken up and tailored in a way that they can be integrated into relevant territorial or thematic policies and strategies. This should happen at the most appropriate level, i.e. European, national, regional or local.
- **Downstreaming:** Existing outputs and results are tailored in a way that they can be further rolled-out at the national, regional or local level. Such roll-out could happen geographically to utilise adapted outputs and results in other regions; or thematically to utilise these in other sectors than initially addressed. The main aim of downstreaming is to give regions in central Europe easier access to transnational outputs and results.

Both approaches are complementary and a combination of the two in one proposal is possible.

Examples of projects focusing on the upstreaming or downstreaming of outputs and results are provided in chapter 4.

Outputs and results to be exploited

Due to the experimental character of the call and its limited budget, the thematic focus was restricted to the following seven topics:

- I. Industry 4.0/advanced manufacturing
- II. Social entrepreneurship
- III. Energy efficient renovation of public buildings in cities
- IV. Low carbon mobility and urban air quality
- V. Climate change adaptation and risk prevention
- VI. Cultural heritage (sites & buildings) at risk
- VII. Accessibility for peripheral and border regions to TEN-T CNC networks/nodes

These topics were chosen on the basis of a thorough analysis, including a survey addressed at all first and second call project partners. The above topics were selected because they:

- Reflect challenges that are relevant for central European regions and most urgently need transnational solutions;¹
- Represent a critical mass of outputs and results with a high potential to influence the design and improvement of territorial and sectorial policies or strategies (upstreaming); or to improve the situation of local and regional target groups (downstreaming).
- Show a good potential to coordinate with projects funded by other EU programmes, which are directly managed by the European Commission.

The seven topics are specifically addressed by 44 out of the 85 Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects, which were approved in the first and second call.

Annex 1 provides, for each topic, a description of the thematic focus, a summary of the challenges and policy framework, the expected results, the reference to the respective programme Specific Objective. Furthermore, the annex contains the list of the 44 Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects linked to the 7 topics.

Within the fourth call, **applications can be submitted only under the programme Specific Objectives referring to the above seven topics**, as further specified in annex 1.

2.2. Joining forces and coordination

The experimental character of the call goes beyond the simple exploitation of outputs and results. It also aims at a better coordination of exploitation activities within and beyond the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE community.

Existing outputs and results can be better exploited by joining forces, thus mobilising a critical mass that can effectively influence policies (upstreaming) or better roll out the results at the regional and local levels (downstreaming). But successful project proposals in the fourth call will have to go beyond a mere pooling of outputs and results. They have to further develop, improve and adapt existing outputs and results by making use of experiences of more than one project. They have to put together knowledge, to increase outreach, visibility and political attention as well as to improve existing networks, thus addressing the limiting factors for an effective exploitation of good outputs and results. To this end, projects are encouraged to involve relevant stakeholders who have not yet participated in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects. Above all, they have to **demonstrate how their project will create synergies and add value beyond what was already achieved**.

With the fourth call, the programme offers the opportunity to combine not only Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE outputs and results, but also those delivered by projects funded under other EU programmes. The external focus will be on those programmes **directly managed by the European Commission** (e.g. FP7/Horizon 2020, LIFE, Connecting Europe Facility, Creative Europe, ...).²

¹ A comprehensive analysis of the challenges affecting the central Europe area is included in the study "Socio-economic challenges, potentials and impacts of transnational cooperation in central Europe" (wiiw, 2018) available for download from <http://interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/discover/InterregCE-ImpactAnalysis.zip>.

² More information about how EU funds are managed can be found at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/how-eu-funding-works/management-eu-funding_en#differentmanagementmodes. For further guidance on directly managed programmes please consult the permanent help-desk at the JS (see chapter 7).

By encouraging thematic coordination between the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE community and stakeholders from other EU funds, the fourth call will be an important experience for preparing the next EU programming period 2021-2027. This call experiment will bring valuable insights for applying future coordination, complementarity and coherence between EU funds, which will be a strategic priority in the next programming period.³

2.3. Minimum requirements for exploitation and coordination

The following **minimum requirements** regarding projects to be exploited in the fourth call were defined.

To be eligible, project proposals must demonstrate that they:

- Focus on one of the seven pre-selected topics (listed in chapter 2.1 and further described in annex 1)
- Coordinate the exploitation of outputs and results obtained from:
 - At least two projects funded by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme and listed in annex 1 (even if they belong to different topics);
 - And at least one thematically relevant project funded by a programme directly-managed by the European Commission (e.g. Horizon 2020/7th Framework Programme, LIFE, Connecting Europe Facility, Creative Europe, ...)

Further requirements on partnership are included in chapter 3.

Please note that these are **minimum requirements**. This means that additional outputs and results developed within Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects other than those mentioned in annex 1, as well as within projects funded by any other Interreg programme (cross-border, transnational and Interregional), or national and regional programmes of the Investment for Growth and Jobs Objective, can also be exploited within the fourth call **as long as the above minimum requirements are satisfied and the enlargement to additional project outputs and results is duly justified**.

³ Specific obligations for the European Commission and Member States to set in place mechanisms for the coordination between funds have been included in the draft regulations for the 2021-2027 funding period. See for example the draft "Common Provisions Regulation" [COM(2018) 375 of 29.05.2018].

3. Who can apply? Partners type and partnerships

3.1. Partners' requirements

Eligibility of partners

The fourth call is open to all organisations that classify as:

- a. National, regional and local public bodies⁴ (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 Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Member State or (with restrictions) under international law.⁵

Please note that so-called "service providers" cannot be involved as project partners. Service providers are understood as organisations with a business focus and project role that is exclusively focused on project coordination, management, communication or other project executive and support activities. Compliance with this requirement will be checked during the quality assessment of project proposals and could lead to the exclusion of such partners.

Lead partner requirements

With the **exception of international organisations acting under international law**, all eligible organisations can take the lead partner role. The lead partner organisation must be located in the programme area or qualify as an "assimilated partner" (see below).

Responsibilities of the lead partner are laid down in the subsidy contract, which will have to be signed with the Managing Authority (MA). In turn, the lead partner will have to stipulate a partnership agreement with all project partners. The models of subsidy contract and partnership agreement are available on www.interreg-central.eu/documents (section "Implementation Documents").

Private institutions acting as lead partners must comply with minimum criteria on financial capacity that are described in chapter 6.1 (point b). Proposals submitted by private lead applicants that do not meet the necessary financial capacity criteria will be rejected. Private lead applicants should therefore carefully check their financial capacity against the programme criteria before submitting an application.

⁴ 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 also eligible partners belonging to this category.

⁵ 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. For further information on restrictions applicable to international organisations acting under international law, please contact the JS at info@interreg-central.eu.

Private lead partners will be asked to provide a valid financial guarantee before signing the subsidy contract. This guarantee has to be issued by a primary financial institution (e.g. a bank or an insurance company). Minimum requirements of the financial guarantee are provided in a document available on www.interreg-central.eu/documents (section "Application Documents")

Geographical location of partners

As a basic principle, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme supports cooperation between project partners located in the programme area. The geographic location of EGTCs is considered to be in the country where they are registered.

Organisations from outside the programme area can also participate in project proposals - but only in exceptional cases, when they qualify as:

- **Assimilated partners**, i.e. German and Italian national public authorities and bodies that are 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 beneficial for the regions in the programme area.
- **EU partners from outside the CENTRAL EUROPE programme area** (so called "20 % partners"), i.e. organisations that are located outside the programme area but inside the European Union. The following restrictions apply:
 - The participation of "20 % partners" must bring clear added value and expertise to the implementation of a project and has to be beneficial for the CENTRAL EUROPE programme area.
 - ERDF budget allocated to these partners, together with the ERDF budget spent outside the programme area (see chapter 4.4) must not exceed 20 % of the total ERDF contribution to the project.
 - "20 % partners" cannot take the lead partner role.
 - Should activities to be carried out by "20 % partners" be considered as State aid relevant, the participation of these partners will finally not be allowed.
 - The legal status declared by "20 % partners" in the project proposal will have to be confirmed by competent national authorities of the respective Member States outside the programme area. The concerned applicants are responsible for obtaining the legal status confirmation by their competent national authorities (see also chapter 6.1 point c.).
 - The participation of "20 % partners" in a successful proposal will be subject to the condition that the respective Member States sign an agreement with the MA on the acceptance of all management, control and audit responsibilities as well as of liabilities in case of irregularities. If this agreement is not signed within **12 months** from the date of the MC decision for funding, the concerned "20 % partner" will be excluded from the project.
- **Third country partners**, i.e. institutions located in countries outside the EU. Partners from non-EU countries will not receive ERDF funding from the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

Associated partners

Institutions that are interested in planned project outputs and results and willing to directly participate in the project without financially contributing to it, could be involved as associated partners.

Associated partners are key stakeholders, whose involvement in the project is relevant for planning, developing and sustaining outputs and results. Associated partners should directly contribute to the project by taking ownership. They should help to mainstream project results and to generate multiplier and leverage effects according to a participatory approach.

The involvement of associated partners should be well defined in the project work plan, as also explained in chapter 4.2. However, the required competences and capacities for implementing the project must be independent from associated partners and have to be held by the lead partner and project partners.

3.2. Minimum requirements for partnerships

The composition of a partnership should be directly linked to the exploitation and coordination scope of the fourth call. Project proposals should involve partners who are **relevant and competent for upstreaming and/or downstreaming of existing outputs and results**. Thematic competences and expertise as well as the partners' geographical and institutional relevance and capacity have to be considered. The partnership should demonstrate that it comprises the institutional capacities that are needed for implementing and adapting outputs and results, for rolling them out as well as for ensuring their sustainability.

As minimum requirement, partnerships must involve:

- at least three "financing" partners (i.e. at least a lead partner and two project partners);
- from at least three countries; and...
- ...with at least two of the partners located in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE regions.

Due to the "capitalisation through coordination" approach of the fourth call, additional minimum requirements for project partnerships were defined. The aim is to ensure that organisations, who have developed the outputs and results that will be exploited, are adequately represented in the project proposals.

To be eligible, partnerships have to make sure that:

- At least 50 % of the partnership consists of institutions and bodies that have been involved in the pre-selected Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects (even if they belong to different topics - see annex 1) whose outputs and results are going to be exploited.

Please note: If an institution or body has been a partner in more than one of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects being exploited in a proposal, it only counts as a single partner for the fulfilment of this requirement.

- At least one partner is included from a project funded by a directly-managed EU programme, who brings in additional project outputs and results that will be exploited by the partnership.

Please note: If an institution or body has been a partner in both an Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE project and a project funded by a directly-managed EU programme, this minimum requirement is regarded as fulfilled.

In order to encourage more thorough cooperation and coordination of proposals among thematic applicant communities, a limitation on multiple participation of institutions or bodies was introduced.

The same institution or body shall not be involved in more than one proposal within the same topic (as listed in chapter 2.1). If this requirement is not fulfilled, the affected institution or body will be excluded from all proposals in which it is involved within the concerned topic.

Please note: One and the same institution could nevertheless be involved in more proposals in this fourth call as long as the proposals belong to different topics. This could be the case, for example, for larger organisations with many departments working in different thematic areas.

Concrete examples of partnerships are included in the project examples of chapter 4.3.

Please note that in case of a project proposal selected for funding where, during the contracting phase, a partner leaves the partnership and, as a consequence of this, it does not meet the minimum requirements for partnership described in this chapter, the leaving partner shall be substituted with another suitable institution or body allowing to meet the said minimum requirements. If the partnership fails in substituting the leaving partner with a suitable one, the entire proposal becomes ineligible and cannot be funded even if it has been selected.

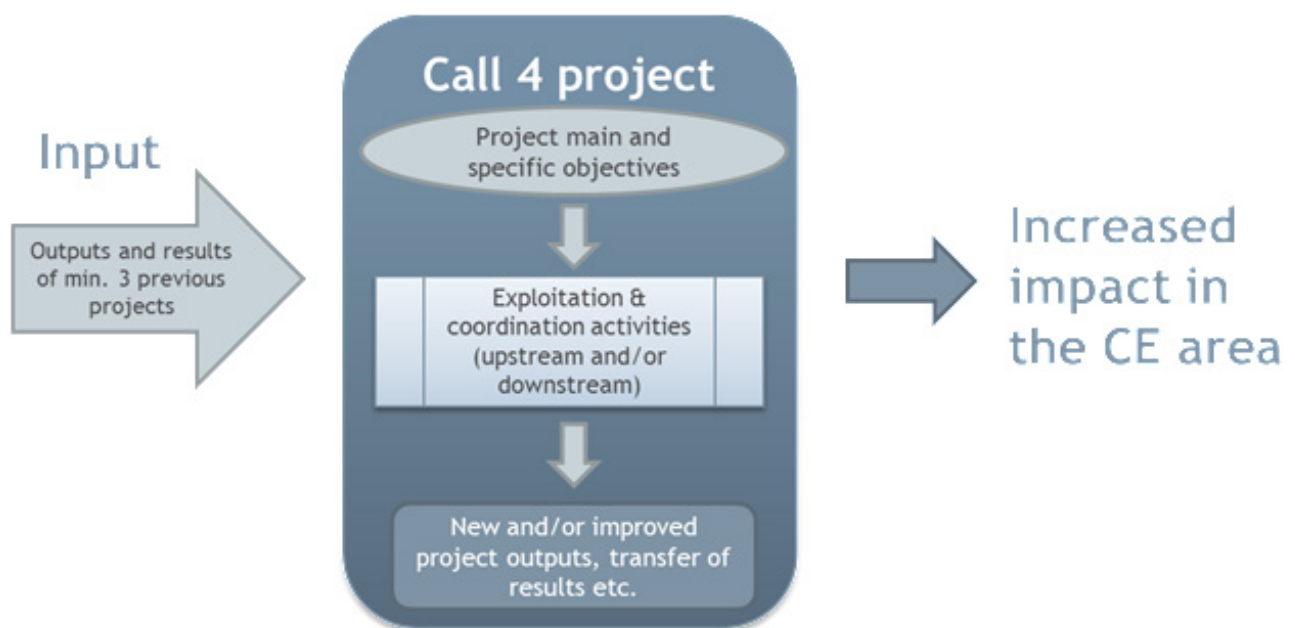
Considering the above, as well as the administrative limitations that affect “20 % partners” (as listed in chapter 3.1), partnerships are strongly encouraged to involve partners from projects funded under other directly managed programmes which are located in the central Europe area.

The involvement of competent institutions and bodies located in regions that did not yet participate in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects is encouraged.

4. What projects are we looking for? Project contents

4.1. Project intervention logic

The most important step in developing a project proposal, is to define the intervention logic. This includes the definition of project objectives, planned outputs and expected results as depicted in the chart below.



The project specific objective should be an **immediate objective** that can be realistically **achieved within the project lifetime** through the planned project outputs.

The **project result** should clearly express a significant **change** which a **project intends to achieve** in the medium and long term compared to the initial situation.

4.2. Project features

Thematic focus

Projects have to clearly focus on one (and only one!) of the seven topics that were pre-selected for the fourth call (see chapter 2.1 and annex 1). Projects can also apply an integrated or cross-sectorial approach by linking to other topics. However the thematic focus of the project on the selected topic shall remain clear.

Projects not showing a clear link to one of the topics of the fourth call (and consequently to the respective programme Specific Objective) will not be supported. Annex 1 contains an overview table linking the topic with the programme Specific Objective.

Exploitation and coordination in practice

Projects must explicitly take up existing outputs and results from previous projects funded by Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE and directly-managed EU programmes. They should build on these in order to contribute to better policy-making (**upstreaming**), to make them more accessible to a wider audience of stakeholders or to roll them out to central European regions beyond those originally involved in the projects (**downstreaming**). To this end, projects are encouraged to involve policy makers as well as stakeholders and regions that did not yet participate in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects. Please refer to chapter 2 for more detailed information on the exploitation and coordination character of the call as well as on the respective minimum requirements.

When planning **project activities**, it is important to focus these on the exploitation of existing outputs and results. Accordingly:

- Preparatory activities and deliverables such as studies or analyses should be limited. If foreseen in a proposal it has to be demonstrated clearly why they are necessary for the exploitation of already existing outputs and results.
- Proposals aiming at downstreaming of outputs and results should mainly focus on the implementation of tools and pilot actions, while proposals aiming at upstreaming should mainly focus on the implementation of strategies and action plans.
- Communication activities have to contribute to the exploitation of outputs and results but shall not be the main focus of a proposal.

Projects have to apply a **result-oriented approach**. They have to define expected results (i.e. desired changes) and explain how this is linked to the addressed territorial challenges and needs.

With their activities, projects should also tackle those factors that have so far limited the full exploitation of existing outputs and results. Projects should contribute to closing the gap between outputs and results already obtained (within a given thematic field) and their uptake into policies or further deployment in central European regions.

Territorial relevance and transnational approach

Project proposals have to be territorially relevant to be successful. With their exploitation activities, they have to clearly address territorial development needs and challenges.

Furthermore, transnational cooperation has to be clearly demonstrated throughout the entire project. It means that the project approach and work plan have to demonstrate that:

- Identified challenges cannot be solved efficiently by individual regions or countries alone;
- Project outputs are embedded in a transnational working approach;
- All partners actively participate in the project according to their competences, in order to achieve the planned joint results;
- Cooperation in the project brings a clear transnational added value that goes beyond the mere combination and linkage of existing outputs and results.

A project is **not considered transnational** when it foresees only local actions that are just vaguely linked through a common topic or an exchange of experiences.

A joint development and implementation of activities as well as joint staffing and financing are central to transnational cooperation projects. Partnerships should therefore specify in the application form the intensity of cooperation along these criteria:

- Joint development (compulsory), i.e. partners integrate their ideas, priorities and actions in the project development process.
- Joint implementation (compulsory), i.e. partners cooperate on and contribute to the implementation of activities under coordination of the lead partner.
- Joint staffing, i.e. functions of partners should not be duplicated but complemented. 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 activities carried out by each project partner. The lead partner is responsible for budget administration and for reporting towards the programme bodies as well as for the distribution of funds to the partners.

Sustainability

The exploitation of existing outputs and results in coordination between Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects and projects funded by other directly managed EU programmes, is expected to further increase their sustainability in terms of territorial impact and long-term benefits. Projects are expected to take a strategic perspective to achieve sustainable results. In order to be successful, it is essential to take into account the needs and institutional contexts of key stakeholders and to involve them in the project design.

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme distinguishes between three dimensions of sustainability that projects need to take into account when planning their results:

- Financial sustainability, i.e. the financing of follow-up activities and investments, leverage of funds, resources for covering future operating and maintenance costs, etc.
- Institutional sustainability, i.e. the „ownership“ of project outputs and results that ensures that these will stay in place after the project end.
- Political sustainability, i.e. the structural impact of project outputs and results, such as improved policies, legislation, plans, codes of conduct, methods, etc.

Innovativeness

Projects have to explicitly demonstrate their innovativeness. They will have to apply novel or innovative approaches that go beyond the state of the art in a specific sector or region.

In the context of the fourth call, projects have to show how existing outputs and results will be further developed, adapted as well as implemented during the project lifetime. The added-value brought by the exploitation, compared to the outputs and results of the previous projects, should be clearly demonstrated.

Innovative approaches could result from, for example: the testing and demonstration of novel solutions within different (regional or sectoral) contexts; the experimental piloting of new methods or tools for future mainstreaming or policy integration; the capitalisation of previously acquired knowledge; etc.

Horizontal principles

Projects have to describe how they will respect horizontal principles that apply to all initiatives supported by the European Union. These are:

- Environment protection and sustainable development
- Equal opportunities and non-discrimination
- Equality between men and women

More details are available in the Implementation Manual (chapter C.1.5.4) available at www.interreg-central.eu/documents (section "Implementation Documents").

Partnership and budget size

The number of partners and the project financial size **shall reflect the scope of a project** and be related to activities foreseen in the work plan (see also chapter 4.3). Accordingly, there is no recommended minimum or maximum size of a partnership⁶ or project budget.

Indicative examples of partnership and budget sizes are provided in chapter 4.3.

Duration

The maximum duration of projects funded within the fourth call is **24 months**. Projects are expected to start their implementation in early 2020.

The latest possible end date for any project funded will be **30 June 2022**.

⁶ For further information on minimum partnership requirements, please refer to chapter 3.2.

4.3. Supported types of project activities

In line with the scope of the fourth call, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme supports project activities which put emphasis on the exploitation of existing project outputs and results (see chapter 2.1). Consequently, activities should focus on the upstream (policy orientation) or down stream of results (practical implementation and roll out). Within a single project both types of activities can be combined.

The types of activities are linked with the typology of outputs followed by the programme, which is further described in annex 4 of this manual.

Project activities for upstreaming

Activities should focus on the uptake and adaption of existing outputs and results with the aim to integrate them into relevant territorial or thematic policies and strategies. This should lead to the creation of new policies or the improvement of existing ones as well as to their concrete adoption and implementation.

Main output types to be exploited: **strategies and action plans**

- Strategies should be defined on the basis of problems which are relevant for the participating regions. A strategy should provide a common vision and set objectives and priorities in a mid- to long-term perspective. The formulation of a transnational or regional strategy should be carried out in cooperation with stakeholders from the policy level and aim at its subsequent implementation.
- Action plans should break down the strategy goals and objectives into specific tasks. They should include the sequence of steps to be taken, or activities that must be performed, for a strategy to succeed. Therefore, action plans should include a timeline, financial resources and responsible actors.

Project activities for downstreaming

Activities should focus on further developing, adapting and rolling out existing project outputs and results at the regional or local level, going even beyond the regions or sectors initially addressed.

Main output types to be exploited by projects of the fourth call are: **tools and pilot actions**

- Tools to be exploited can be methods, concepts or services, analytical tools, management tools, technical tools, software tools, monitoring tools, decision support tools, etc.
- In pilot actions, tools are practically implemented and tested. A pilot action should:
 - Have an experimental or demonstration character, i.e. it should test, evaluate or demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of a novel solution. If a project foresees several pilot actions, these should differ from each other in order to maximise mutual learning among the whole partnership.
 - Be limited in its scope, i.e. in its area, duration, scale, etc. It should be unprecedented in a comparable environment.
 - Be jointly evaluated in terms of results as well as jointly exploited and transferred to other institutions and territories.

Pilot actions can include **pilot investments**, which are **small-scale interventions that contribute to the successful implementation of a pilot action**.

A pilot investment must clearly contribute to project objectives, it must have a demonstration, model or pilot character and show a clear transnational effect that the partnership achieves and evaluates together. The investment should be well integrated into the work plan and show a clear benefit for the target groups. It has to pave the way for subsequent large-scale investments in central European regions, thus increasing the impact of the project.

Projects have to demonstrate that necessary authorisations for pilot investments are already available or can be obtained in time from competent authorities (e.g. building permissions). This should avoid hampering the realisation of the investment and the overall project implementation.

In the project budget, a pilot investment can include items that belong to the budget lines “infrastructure and works” (e.g. for new construction of a building or adapting existing infrastructure) and “thematic equipment” (e.g. for air quality monitoring equipment). For more information on budget line specifications please refer to the Implementation Manual (chapter C.2) available at www.interreg-central.eu/documents (Section “Implementation Documents”).

Pilot investments have to comply with relevant legislation and environmental policies as well as with the durability and ownership requirements as laid down in the Implementation Manual (chapters C.2.6.3 and E.2).

Furthermore, and irrespective to the upstreaming or downstreaming character of the project also **training activities** such as seminars, study visits, peer reviews, online courses, etc. can be foreseen. These could be foreseen as a supporting measure for the exploitation of project outputs and results. Trainings should aim at improving the understanding, knowledge, skills, competences and access to information of the targeted stakeholders. Trainings should be jointly developed at transnational level and tailored according to the needs of the specific territories and target groups.

Please note that training shall not be in the focus of a project proposal.

Project examples

Within the fourth call, projects shall demonstrate a clear **implementation character** able to increase the territorial impact of project outputs and results.

Examples of possible projects reflecting the exploitation and coordination features of the fourth call are presented below. Please note that these examples are **only for information purposes and are of general nature**. They represent only a selection of possible project types or approaches which could be applied.

EXAMPLE

Project example 1: Large project for downstreaming results

OBJECTIVE AND APPROACH

The project aims to increase R&D levels in agro-industry SMEs in peripheral regions. It wants to achieve this by facilitating access of SMEs to R&D results. The project therefore plans to link and improve existing services from various regions that are currently not connected.

The project will build on outputs and results of three Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) projects in the topic “Industry 4.0/Advanced Manufacturing” (programme Specific Objective 1.1). It will also take up new knowledge and solutions developed by one relevant Horizon 2020 (H2020) project. The outputs to be exploited are:

- > CE-Project 1: Platform for business and R&D matchmaking that covers 3 central European regions (CZ, DE, IT)
- > CE-Project 2: Platform for business and R&D matchmaking that covers 4 central European regions (AT, HU, PL, SK)
- > CE-Project 3: Pilot actions for strengthening innovation capacity of agro-industry SMEs
- > H2020-Project 1: New technologies for agro-food processing

The project will also involve regions of HR that were not covered by the previous projects.

PARTNERSHIP

- LP: Region Alfa (DE - former LP of CE-Project 1)
 PP2: Business support agency of Bravo (CZ - former partner of CE- Project 1)
 PP3: Region Charlie (HU - former LP of CE-Project 2)
 PP4: Agro-Industry business association Delta (PL - former partner of CE- Project 2)
 PP5: Research centre on advanced mechatronics (DE - former partner of CE- Project 3 and H2020- Project 1)
 PP6: Company Echo (IT - former partner of CE- Project 3)
 PP7: Company Foxtrot (HU - former partner of H2020- Project 1)
 PP7: University of Golf (IT - newcomer)
 PP8: City of Juliett (HR - newcomer)
 PP9: Chamber of Commerce of Juliett (HR - newcomer)
 PP10: Federal Ministry of Kilo (AT - newcomer)
 PP11: Agro-Industry business association Lima (AT- newcomer)

OUTPUTS

The project will further develop, adapt and roll out existing project outputs and results to increase their impact not only in the regions that initially participated in the previous projects but also beyond (namely also in HR). The project will furthermore test new solutions in pilot actions in a region of HR that was not initially involved in previous projects.

The following main activities and outputs are envisaged:

- > Two improved platforms for business and R&D matchmaking that are newly interlinked with each other and that cover 7 central European regions (AT, CZ, DE, HR, HU, IT, PL).
- > One transnational concept for implementing new R&D solutions on advanced mechatronics in the agro-industry sector
- > 7 pilot actions to implement and test new R&D solutions at the local level in the 7 regions that participate in the project

DURATION

24 months

BUDGET

1,2 million EUR (total cost)

EXAMPLE

Project example 2:

Small project for downstreaming results

OBJECTIVE AND APPROACH	<p>The project aims to increase the capacity of local administrations to manage public buildings in an energy efficient way and to substitute fossil fuels with renewables.</p> <p>The project will build on the existing outputs and results of two Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) projects in the topic “Energy efficient renovation of public building in cities” (programme Specific Objective 2.1). It will also take up new knowledge and solutions developed by a relevant LIFE project. The outputs to be exploited are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > CE-Project 1: Local pilot implementations of concepts related to the energy performance of buildings > CE-Project 2: Innovative financing concepts for deep retrofitting of buildings > LIFE-Project 1: New methodologies for life-cycle assessment of greenhouse gas emissions of buildings <p>The project will reach out to new target groups that were not yet involved.</p>
PARTNERSHIP	<p>LP: Regional Energy Agency Alfa (SK - former partner of CE-Project 1)</p> <p>PP2: City of Bravo (SK - former partner of CE-Project 1)</p> <p>PP3: Regional Energy Agency of Charlie (PL - former LP of CE-Project 2 and LIFE-Project 1)</p> <p>PP4: Research centre on physics (AT - former partner of LIFE-Project 1)</p> <p>PP5: City of Delta (AT - newcomer)</p>
OUTPUTS	<p>The project will further develop, adapt and roll out project outputs and results to increase their impact at the local level. The partnership will apply new knowledge from a LIFE project and involve new target groups, especially public administrators and managers.</p> <p>The following main activities and outputs are envisaged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > One comprehensive joint handbook for smart building management and innovative financing of deep energy renovations > 3 pilot actions, each of them resulting in 3 management plans that are based on the Building Information Modelling (BIM) concept for buildings. The management plans reflect the 3 main typologies of public buildings in each region where the pilot action is implemented. > Implementation of 3 training modules for local public administrators/managers in each participating region
DURATION	15 months
BUDGET	0,6 million EUR (total cost)

EXAMPLE

Project example 3: Middle-sized project for upstreaming results

OBJECTIVE AND APPROACH	<p>The project aims to change regional ecosystems and make them more supportive for social entrepreneurship. It wants to do so by fostering bottom-up policy learning processes that will ultimately improve the policy framework for the social economy. This will lead to a better integration of the social economy in growth agendas. It will also result in the promotion of stable and policy-embedded solutions in central Europe.</p> <p>The project mainly builds on existing outputs and results of two Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) projects within the topic “<i>Social entrepreneurship</i>” (programme Specific Objective 1.2). It will also take up new knowledge and solutions developed by a relevant Horizon 2020 (H2020) project. The outputs to be exploited are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > CE-Project 1: A transnational compendium on social economy in central European regions (toolbox) including an analysis of needs of social enterprises at the regional level, which was carried out with the direct involvement of the target groups. In addition, the project produced an analysis of regional ecosystems related to the social economy. > CE-Project 2: Experiences and lessons learned from pilot actions for supporting social entrepreneurship (mentoring, coaching, etc.) > H2020-Project 1: Policy recommendations building on an in-depth analysis of the policy framework for social entrepreneurship across EU countries
PARTNERSHIP	<p>LP: City of Alfa (SI - former LP of CE-Project 1)</p> <p>PP2: Association for Social Entrepreneur Support (DE - former partner of CE-Project 1)</p> <p>PP3: Ministry of Bravo (CZ - former LP of CE-Project 2)</p> <p>PP4: Research Centre for Economic and Social Sciences (IT - former partner of CE-Project 2 and H2020-Project 1)</p> <p>PP5: Association for Social Economy and Entrepreneurship (SI - former partner of CE-Project 2 and H2020-Project 1)</p> <p>PP6: Business Support Agency of Charlie (DE - newcomer)</p> <p>PP7: Region of Delta (CZ - newcomer)</p> <p>PP8: Region of Echo (IT - newcomer)</p>
OUTPUTS	<p>The project will further develop, adapt and roll-out project outputs and results to increase their impact. The partnership plans to achieve stable and policy-embedded support schemes for social entrepreneurship. The following main activities and outputs are envisaged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 1 transnational strategy and 4 regional action plans for the support of social entrepreneurship. Action plans are tailored to the situation of the participating regions and build on lessons made in previous projects > 4 policy dialogues for the sensitization of policy makers following a participative approach. Deliverables could include round tables or focus groups with policy makers and social partners, etc. > 4 policy uptakes consisting of agreements committing policy makers to taking up project outputs and integrating them into existing policies
DURATION	18 months
BUDGET	0,8 million EUR (total cost)

Opposite to the above, projects **shall not**:

- Show a mere dissemination character;
- Aim at the development of outputs from scratch, without building on existing outputs and results of projects funded by Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE and directly managed EU programmes;
- Foresee too extensive preparatory and status quo analyses, thus lacking of a clear implementation.

4.4. Geographical location of project activities

In line with the requirements for the geographical location of partners (as described in chapter 3.1) and as a basic principle, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme supports project activities taking place in the programme area.

This principle applies to activities carried out by both lead partners and partners. If an assimilated partner is lead partner (see chapter 3.1), core thematic activities must nevertheless be implemented in regions of the programme area, with the exception of project management activities.

Activities planned outside the programme area or in third countries, including the participation in missions, study visits and events, can only be accepted in exceptional and duly justified cases. To be acceptable, the activities must be:

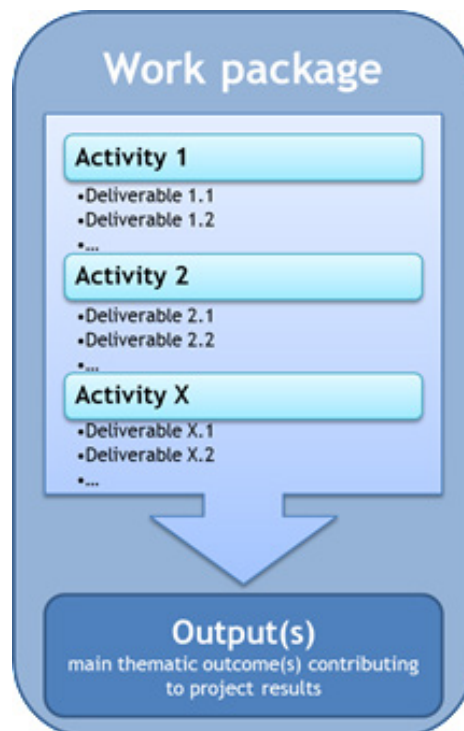
- For the benefit of regions in the programme area;
- Essential for the implementation of the project;
- Explicitly foreseen in the application form or, if not, previously authorised by the MA/JS.

Costs related to such activities outside the programme area 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 “20 % partners”, for which specific provisions are given in chapter 3.1.

4.5. Guidance on work plan development

Projects have to describe in work plans how their activities will actually lead to the delivery of outputs that are necessary for achieving the project specific objectives.

The work plan is composed of work packages. Each work package is further broken down into activities, deliverables and outputs, as the following chart shows and as further explained in the following table:



TERM	DEFINITION AND EXPLANATIONS
OUTPUTS	<p>The implementation of project activities foreseen in a work package (see below) will lead to the project outputs. Each output should be captured by a programme output indicator and directly contribute to the achievement of the project result. Each thematic work package must foresee at least one output.</p> <p>The programme foresees the following types of outputs (see annex 4):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Strategy and action plan development and/or implementation > Tool development and/or implementation > Pilot actions > Trainings > Innovation networks (only applicable to programme specific objective 1.1) <p>For each of the project outputs, one or more deliverables have to be foreseen in the work plan.</p>
ACTIVITIES	<p>All work packages (except for WP Preparation and WP Investment Specification) consist of activities. These activities lead to the development of one or more project outputs (see also above). The start and end month as well as the indicative cost must be specified for each activity. The sum of indicative activity costs in a work package should be equal to the work package budget.</p> <p>Ideally there are no more than 4-6 activities planned per work package.</p>
DELIVERABLES	<p>Activities should include one or more deliverables that contribute to achieving project outputs. Deliverables could be an analysis report, a feasibility study, and many others.</p> <p>It is not necessary to include deliverables for all small steps of a single activity, such as stakeholder meeting documentations, working groups etc. Ideally, these are aggregated into a joint deliverable, e.g. a qualitative report describing stakeholder involvement.</p>

How outputs can be used by the addressed target groups is particularly important. The main target groups have to be chosen from a pre-defined list (see also annex 4 which includes the classification of target groups). It has to be described how those target groups and other stakeholders will be involved in the development of the foreseen outputs. If applicable, the description should clearly highlight the purpose and way of involvement of associated partners.

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

WP TYPE	MANDATORY	CONTENT
PREPARATION	NO	Related to the request of a lump sum for preparation and contracting costs (as explained in chapter 4.6)
MANAGEMENT	YES	Project management and coordination activities (including communication activities to ensure the involvement of the project partners) One management WP per project
THEMATIC	YES	Content-related activities linked to the achievement of project objectives and results (including communication activities to ensure the involvement of external target audiences) WP title to be defined by the partnership reflecting the content and intended result of the WP. From one to max. four thematic work packages per project
INVESTMENT SPECIFICATION	ONLY FOR INVESTMENTS ABOVE EUR 15.000	Applicable only if the project foresees investment(s). 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 . Investments have to be linked to a pilot action carried out within a thematic work package. An investment is composed of only two budget lines, namely budget line 5 "equipment expenditure" and/or budget line 6 "infrastructure and works" for further information on budget lines please refer to chapter C.2 of the programme Implementation Manual). 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 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. Investment title to be defined by the partnership reflecting its thematic focus. <i>Please note that irrespective to the planned cost of the investment (i.e. requiring or not a separate investment specification), all pilot investments have to comply with the requirements as defined in chapter 4.3. Investments amounting to up to EUR 15.000 (total cost) shall only be described in the thematic work package and linked to a deliverable.</i>
COMMUNICATION	YES	Communication activities that will ensure the sustainability of achieved outputs and results One communication WP per project. For more information on how to plan and implement project communication activities, please refer to the Implementation Manual, in particular chapters A.3 and C.1.5.3. The manual is available at www.interreg-central.eu/documents in the section "Implementation Documents".

Applicants have to define **targets for thematic and communication result indicators** that reflect the scope of foreseen activities. These indicators aim at capturing the result and effects of implementation and communication. Definitions and further details on these indicators are available in the programme implementation manual (chapter B.2).

4.6. Project finances

Sound project budget

Projects supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme must have a budget which fully accomplishes the principles of adequacy of costs and sound financial management (i.e. economy, efficiency and effectiveness). The project budget has to reflect the work plan i.e. activities, deliverables and outputs planned by each project partner in order to achieve the intended results.

The programme has developed a non-binding example of a tool (a MS-excel sheet) that could be used by applicants when designing their project budgets, available for download from www.interreg-central.eu/documents (section "Application Documents").

Preparation and contracting costs

Approved projects may be 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 contracting⁷ 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 application form**, giving information on the amount allocated to the concerned project partner(s). More information on the terms and conditions of payment can be found in chapter A.1.4 of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Implementation Manual available for download from www.interreg-central.eu/documents (section "Implementation Documents").

The lump sum for preparation and contracting costs is to be foreseen in the application form under the Work package "Preparation" and budget line 4 "external expertise and services costs".

⁷ 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.

Revenues

As a general principle⁸, 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 to be calculated by taking the cash inflows directly paid by users for the goods/services provided by the project e.g. charges borne by users for the use of infrastructure, sale/rent of land/buildings, or payments for services and deducting any operating costs and replacement costs of short-life equipment incurred during the corresponding period.

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 application** form 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 1.000.000⁹;
- If the specific project output generating net revenue is State aid relevant (for further information on State aid please refer to chapter C.1.5.2 of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Implementation Manual).

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.

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

⁹ 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.

Time-wise eligibility of expenditure

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 described above as well as in chapter A.1.4 of the programme Implementation Manual. 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 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).

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:

Maximum ERDF co-financing rate	80 %	85 %	80 %	No ERDF co-financing Participation with own funds
Member State	Austria, Germany, Italy	Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia	Others	Outside the EU

In case of an EGTC covering a geographical area 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.

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 C.1.5.2 of the programme Implementation Manual.

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 organisation, must be confirmed in the respective declarations submitted together with the application form (see also chapter 5.1).

5. How to apply? The application form and eMS

5.1. Application package

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

- Call announcement for the fourth call, i.e. the document constituting the legal basis for the call, outlining its main contents and requirements as well as the deadline for submission;
- Application manual (i.e. this document including its annexes) that provides detailed explanations and guidance for developing and submitting project proposals;
- Off-line template of application form.

Contents of the application form

The application form has to be filled in in English as this is the working language of the programme. It is structured in seven sections and several sub-sections, as presented below, with additional information and explanations under each sub-section:

SECTION	HEADERS (SUB-SECTIONS)
A	A - PROJECT OVERVIEW A.1 Project identification A.2 Project summary A.3 Project budget - breakdown per partner A.4 Project outputs
B	B - PARTNERS B.1 Lead partner/project partners B.2 Associated partners (if applicable)
C	C - PROJECT DESCRIPTION C.1 Project relevance C.2 Project focus C.3 Project context C.4 Horizontal principles C.5 Additional indicators
D	D - WORK PLAN (INCLUDING TIME LINE) D.1 Work package description D.2 Target groups D.3 Periods
E	E - PARTNER BUDGET E.1 Partner budget E.2 Activities outside the programme area E.3 Project breakdown budget
F	F- PROJECT BUDGET Project budget overview tables
G	G - ANNEXES > Partner declarations > Supporting documents for private lead applicants (if applicable)

The application form is also composed by the following annexes that are to be submitted together with the application form:

- Lead applicant and partner declarations
- Supporting documents of private lead applicants (if applicable)

Lead applicant and partner declarations

The lead applicant and each partner have to fill in and submit a declaration. Templates of lead applicant and partner declarations are provided as annex 2 to this manual and are differentiated according to the legal status of the applicant. Lead applicant and partner declarations also contain a specific section concerning State aid, together with detailed guidance on this matter.

The templates of lead applicant and partner declarations are provided as protected MS-Word documents.

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 electronic Monitoring 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.

Please note that in case of missing signature of the lead applicant declaration, the application becomes non-eligible. For further information on the formal/administrative requirements to be observed when submitting the application form please refer to chapter 6.1 point a.

Supporting documents in case of private lead applicants

Further supporting documents of administrative and financial nature have to be provided as annex to the 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 3 to this manual) 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.

Please note that only scanned versions of the signed documents have to be provided. Signed hard-copies of the documents are to be provided only by applications selected for funding (i.e. during the contracting phase).

5.2. Online submission system (eMS)

Applicants have to complete and submit the application form electronically via the electronic Monitoring System (eMS) which can be accessed under the following link <https://ems.interreg-central.eu/>.

For detailed technical guidance on eMS (technical requirements, registration, filling in and submitting the application form, help desk and technical support) please refer to annex 5 of this manual.

The application form has to be accompanied by the documents listed in the previous chapter, notably declarations by the lead applicant and all project partners as well as additional documents in case of private lead applicants, to be uploaded in eMS as scans.

Only complete applications submitted within the call deadline and containing all required annexes will be considered as eligible. For further information on formal eligibility requirements please refer to chapter 6.1. point a.

6. How projects are assessed? Eligibility and assessment criteria

6.1. Assessment procedure

a. Formal/administrative compliance check

Formal/administrative requirements to be observed by proposals are the following:

1. Submission of the proposal before the deadline set in the call announcement;
2. Submission of the application form completed in all its parts and in English language;
3. Submission of the lead applicant declaration signed and filled in in all its parts using the template provided by the programme without any modification, as further explained in chapter 5.1;
4. Submission of all partner declarations filled in in all their parts using the template provided by the programme without any modification, as further explained in chapter 5.1;
5. In case of private lead applicant, availability of all other supporting documents as listed in chapter 5.1.

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

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.

As described in the previous chapters, **the fourth call sets additional specific requirements** to be fulfilled by project proposals in order to be considered as eligible. They are summarised in the following table.

REQUIREMENT	EXPLANATION
A. THEMATIC FOCUS	<p>The project proposal focuses on one of the following 7 topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Industry 4.0/advanced manufacturing > Social entrepreneurship > Energy efficient renovation of public buildings in cities > Low carbon mobility and urban air quality > Climate change adaptation and risk prevention > Cultural heritage (sites & buildings) at risk > Accessibility for peripheral and border regions to TEN-T CNC networks/nodes
B. COORDINATION	<p>The project proposal coordinates the exploitation of outputs and results obtained from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > at least two projects funded by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme and listed in annex 1 (even if they belong to different topics); > And at least one thematically relevant project funded by a programme directly-managed by the European Commission (e.g. Horizon 2020/7th Framework Programme, LIFE, Connecting Europe Facility, Creative Europe, ...) <p>Further information on exploitation and coordination requirements is provided in chapter 2.3.</p>
C. PARTNERSHIP	<p>The partnership (as listed in section 2 of the application form) must respect the following minimum requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > At least 50 % of the partnership consists of institutions and bodies that have been involved in the pre-selected Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects (even if they belong to different topics - see annex 1) whose outputs and results are going to be exploited. > At least one partner is included from a project funded by a directly-managed EU programme, who brings in additional project outputs and results that will be exploited by the partnership. <p>Further information on partnership requirements is provided in chapter 3.2.</p>
D. COMPULSORY CONSULTATION	<p>The project proposal must have been consulted with the JS in the framework of a "compulsory consultation". For further information on compulsory consultations please see chapter 7.</p>
E. MULTIPLE PARTICIPATION	<p>A same institution/body cannot be involved in more than one proposal within a same topic.</p>

Proposals not meeting the above first four call-specific requirements will be regarded as non-eligible and will not be further processed.

Institutions/bodies participating in more than one proposal within a same topic (requirement 4 above) will be excluded from all proposals in which it is involved within that same topic.

b. Financial Capacity Check

On the basis of information contained in the documents submitted by private lead applicants (as listed in chapter 5.1), a financial capacity check is performed when assessing project proposals. 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“, in compliance with the applicable legal framework. As a general principle, the financial capacity check verifies 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 lower than 1
2. The ratio „current assets“ + „cash and cash equivalents“ / „current liabilities“ is higher than 1
3. The ratio „total debts“ / „total assets“ is lower than 0.8
4. There is a positive 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 lower than 1
2. The ratio „current assets“ + „cash and cash equivalents“ / „current liabilities“ is higher than 1
3. The ratio „total debts“ / „total assets“ is lower than 0.8

The entire proposal will be rejected in case that the private lead applicant does not meet the necessary financial capacity criteria. This considered, the programme strongly recommends private institutions planning to apply as lead applicants to check their ability to fulfil the financial capacity criteria mentioned in this chapter well before the submission of the application.

Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE provides a complimentary tool for calculating the ratios of the financial viability test (available for download on www.interreg-central.eu/documents - section "Application Documents") . 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.

c. Legal status and capacity check

Checks on the correctness of the declarations submitted by applicants, including the verification of the declared legal status, will be carried out by competent national authorities of the concerned Member States. Such authorities might require additional documents in order to confirm declarations submitted by the applicants. Information on additional documents to be provided will be published on the programme website under www.interreg-central.eu/apply.

It is to be noted that lead applicants declaring themselves as public that, following the legal status and capacity check, are declared as privates by the competent national authorities, they have to heal the situation by uploading on eMS additional compulsory documents for private lead applicants as listed in chapter 5.1. Additional documents are to be provided within 5 working days from the date of written request by the MA/JS. In the case that the concerned lead applicants fail to upload such documents on eMS within the given timeframe, the project proposal will become not eligible and will not be further processed.

In case of applicants located in EU regions outside the programme area , 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 within 45 calendar days counted as from the date of the MC funding decision for the call. 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.

In case of EGTCs (as defined in chapter 3.1) the aforementioned checks are performed by competent national authorities of the country in which the EGTC is registered.

In case that the capacity and legal status of any applicant is not confirmed by the competent national authorities, the concerned applicants will be excluded from the projects and partnership modification procedures shall be initiated in compliance with chapter D.3 of the programme implementation manual.

d. State aid analysis

The State aid analysis is aimed at checking the State aid relevance of activities planned within the project proposal.

This analysis is performed on the basis of information included in the application form and in the lead applicant and partner declarations. 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.

For further information on the approach followed by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme with regard to State aid please refer to chapter C.1.5.2 of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Implementation Manual, available for download from www.interreg-central.eu/documents (section "Implementation Documents").

e. Quality assessment criteria

Applications passing the Formal/administrative compliance check (and the financial capacity check in case of private lead applicants) enter into the quality assessment phase.

The quality assessment comprises a set of strategic and operational assessment criteria, as described under section 2 "Guiding principles for selection of operations" of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation Programme document.

The quality assessment is performed against the following assessment criteria and the related guiding questions.

Assessment criteria

STRATEGIC

1. RELEVANCE

1.1 Intervention logic and transnationality, policy and territorial relevance

- > How relevant is the project proposal in relation to the targeted programme specific objective considering its thematic focus and the expected result? How well are territorial challenges and common needs addressed?
- > Are the specific project objectives, expected results and outputs clearly defined and consistent?
- > Is the importance and added value of the transnational cooperation approach clearly demonstrated?
- > How clearly does the project contribute to the relevant policy framework (at EU, national, regional levels, incl. eventual contributions to macro-regional strategies where applicable for the project scope)? How well does it integrate horizontal principles (i.e. sustainable development, environment, equality)?

1.2 Innovativeness, exploitation and coordination

- > Is the approach for the coordination and exploitation of outputs and results demonstrated and justified? Is it likely to increase the impact of existing outputs and results at the territorial level?
- > Is the innovativeness of the project clearly demonstrated and how far does it go beyond existing practice in the sector and/or participating regions?
- > If applicable, is the project building on further available knowledge and making use of synergies with other projects or initiatives beyond those directly exploited?

2. PARTNERSHIP

Partnership expertise, competence, composition and TN cooperation approach

- > Does the partnership include sufficient competences and 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
- > Does the partnership composition reflect the transnational cooperation approach and is it geographically balanced?
- > Do all partners have a clear role and are they actively involved for a joint implementation of the foreseen activities?
- > Does the lead applicant have sufficient experience and capacity to manage a transnational cooperation project?

3. IMPLEMENTATION

Methodology and work plan including management and communication

- > Are the planned approach and methodology suitable to obtain the intended outputs and results? Are the work plan and timing of activities, deliverables and outputs realistic, consistent and transparent? Is the overall project duration realistic to achieve the foreseen outputs?
- > In case of investments foreseen, are they clearly functional for reaching the project objectives and do they have a clear transnational character?
- > How well does the project demonstrate the sustainability and transferability of outputs and results?
- > To which extent are target groups (and other stakeholders including associated partners) involved in the development of the outputs?
- > Does the management structure show sufficient potential to secure a sound content wise and financial management of the project?
- > Are the planned communication activities relevant for achieving the project's communication objectives (as described in the WPC summary)? Are the communication objectives and activities relevant for achieving the project's overall goals?

OPERATIONAL

4. BUDGET

Value for money, budget coherence and partner contributions

- > Does the total budget demonstrate value for money?
- > Is there coherence between project design and budget?
- > Are the financial contributions of the partners balanced and do they reflect partner responsibilities?

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 described above. The Monitoring Committee decision on project selection is expected by the end of 2019 and projects are expected to start in early 2020.

6.2. Communication to lead applicants and resolution of complaints

Communications to lead applicants

The lead applicants will be notified in writing about the outcome of the formal/administrative compliance check, the financial capacity check (if applicable) and the quality assessment, 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.

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.

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.

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, the legal status check of applicants or, where applicable, the financial capacity check of the private lead applicant, 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 Monitoring Committee 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 Monitoring Committee on the decision taken. The MA and/or the concerned Monitoring Committee member may also refer the complaint to the entire Monitoring Committee for decision making. The Monitoring Committee may also set up a task force or a sub-committee to deal with the complaints and in this case the Managing Authority 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. The MA/JS will then provide the Monitoring Committee with an updated assessment on which basis the Monitoring Committee 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 or State aid assessment of the project proposal, the assessment of the project proposal and the related Monitoring Committee 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.

7. Where to get help? Support measures

Cross-fertilisation and matchmaking workshops

On **2-3 April 2019 in Vienna**, workshops will be held with the specific aim to identify potential synergies for exploitation of outputs and results in preparation of the fourth call. The workshops will provide basic information about the call and increase awareness of exploitable results from other Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects. The event will encourage initial matchmaking among projects as well as the discussion of ideas for project proposals.

Up to 4 partners from Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects of the first and second call can participate. From the third call projects, only lead partners will be able to participate. They will then be encouraged to inform their partnerships in the upcoming project meetings.

For more information, please check www.interreg-central.eu/apply

Info Day with European Commission

Following up on the initial idea generation and matchmaking workshops in Vienna, Horizon 2020 and Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE will jointly organise an Info Day in **Brussels in early May 2019**. This event will primarily aim at facilitating the matchmaking between Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE partners and partners from H2020/FP7 research projects. To achieve this, the event will offer interested lead applicants to pitch their project ideas to research institutions and involve them in the proposal. In addition, side meetings can be held among applicants.

For more information, please check www.interreg-central.eu/apply

Digital matchmaking and partner search

The matchmaking and partner search events will be complemented by digital measures. The main tool will be the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE applicant community, on which project ideas can be presented and shared for attracting additional partners. The community will be launched on 4 March at www.interreg-central.eu/community

In addition to the web community, a LinkedIn group for partner search offers support and networking opportunities. It has nearly 1 000 members already. Information on the call will be published in this group and applicants can discuss project ideas and exchange: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/5145214/>

Digital applicant training

Building on positive experiences made in previous calls and the fact that the fourth call primarily addresses already experienced beneficiaries, the applicant training will be shifted to digital to a large extent. Information on how to develop an application will thus be available when applicants need it the most.

The programme website offers comprehensive information on the call. Frequently asked questions (FAQs) will be collected and answers will be updated regularly. All relevant documents will be available on www.interreg-central.eu/apply.

Hands-on tutorials will be published on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnfEQzGh-PuWphBYmpQhZlojpHbFR5wvp> as of early March 2019. The tutorials will also be distributed through social media channels such as the LinkedIn partner search group mentioned above.

Permanent helpdesk

The digital approach to building applicant capacities will be complemented by individual support on the national and transnational level.

The network of National Contact Points will provide support in national languages on primarily national application issues (through phone/Skype or personal meetings). On the transnational level, enquiries will be answered by an experienced helpdesk team that can be reached by phone or at info@interreg-central.eu.

Questions submitted via social media will be answered on the same channel by the helpdesk team.

Compulsory consultations

Following an initial application development and matchmaking phase, lead applicants have to book compulsory consultations **between 8 April and 28 June 2019**. The main aim of these consultations is to advise lead applicants on the relevance of their project ideas and to clarify technical questions on content, communication and finances.

Compulsory consultations can be held on the phone, online or in person by the programme Joint Secretariat in Vienna. They will last a maximum of one hour and it is recommended to book a **consultation only when a project idea is developed in some detail**. Not more than one individual consultation will be offered to the same project proposal.

Compulsory consultations will cover content issues as well as finances and communication. **Consultation slots have to be requested via email through the Helpdesk**, which can be reached at helpdesk@interreg-central.eu. For questions of a more general nature the permanent helpdesk can be addressed any time.

Requests for a compulsory consultation from a lead applicant **must be accompanied by a preliminary concept** already. Otherwise a slot cannot be booked. This concept must be based on the project idea form, which is available in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Community (see above). Please note: Consultations will not be based on the application form as such and cannot be regarded as a pre-assessment.

After a compulsory consultation, the programme will issue to the lead applicant an e-mail confirming that the individual consultation took place.

Please note: project proposals submitted without participating in the compulsory consultation will become ineligible and will not be further processed.
