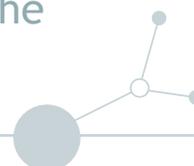




CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

addressed to independent experts for the assessment of the
financial capacity of private lead applicants



Version 1
02 2022





1. Background

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme (Interreg CE) is established based on Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1058, Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059 and Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1060. The Interreg CE Programme for the 2021-2027 period is available at www.interreg-central.eu.

Central Europe is a core area of the European Union. Interreg CE covers regions and cities from nine EU Member States: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE envisions a united central Europe that cooperates - to become smarter, greener and better connected together. Based on shared needs and a common identity in an area long divided by the 'Iron Curtain', the programme aims for a trustful culture of cooperation beyond administrative borders.

The programme mission is to bring regions and cities together beyond borders to find fitting solutions for their citizens - in a fair and equal way everywhere. It encourages and supports transnational cooperation to make regions more resilient to common challenges that know no borders and which cannot be solved alone. These challenges include among others economic transition processes, climate change, and the long-term socioeconomic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The programme focuses on four thematic priorities:

1. Cooperating for a smarter central Europe
2. Cooperating for a greener central Europe
3. Cooperating for a better-connected Europe
4. Improving governance for cooperation in central Europe

The total programme budget for projects is around 208 million Euros from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The programme is managed by a structure comprising institutions at the European, national and regional levels. Main decision-making body is the "Monitoring Committee" (MC), which is composed of representatives of the Member States of the Programme. As Managing Authority (MA), the Department for European Affairs of the City of Vienna is responsible for the operational management of the programme. It is supported by a Joint Secretariat (JS), i.e. an international office that is also located in Vienna, and a network of National Contact Points (NCPs), that are located in the participating Member States. The programme language is English.

For more information on the Interreg CE Programme and its call for proposals please visit: www.interreg-central.eu.

2. Objectives and scope

This call for experts invites individuals to express their interest to assist the Interreg CE Programme in their personal capacity with the assessment of the financial capacity of private lead applicants in project proposals submitted to the programme within calls. The check is aimed at assessing whether the private lead applicant has stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain its activity throughout the project implementation period and to participate in its funding.

This call for expression of interest is open until 31.12.2025.



3. Description of the assignment

The tasks to be accomplished by the expert consist of the following:

- Acquaintance of relevant programme documents and support materials (e.g. Interreg CE Programme, application package, programme manual, templates and procedures).
- Participation in an online briefing meeting with the MA/JS (optional).
- Assessment of the financial documents submitted by the private lead applicant namely:
 - The "Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE simplified financial statement" in which data included in the balance sheets and profit and loss accounts of the last two financial years is transcribed by the private lead applicant.
 - Balance sheets and profit and loss accounts of the last two financial years.
 - An audit report issued by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last financial year; OR In case the private lead applicant is not able to obtain the audit report, a reference letter from the bank where the private lead applicant holds an account.

In detail, for each private lead applicant, the expert will have to perform the following tasks:

- Check the completeness of the balance sheets and profit and loss accounts of the last two financial years;
- Check the coherence of data included in the simplified financial statement against data in the balance sheets and profit and loss accounts and in the application form;
- Analyse, if applicable, the independent audit report to verify that:
 - The auditor has carried out the task in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and without restriction as to the scope of the work necessary to express his/her opinion, that the financial statements audited were drawn up in accordance with appropriate or generally accepted accounting principles, and that they give a true and fair view of the organisation's financial situation.
 - The auditor has given an "unqualified opinion" about the lead applicant's financial viability.
- Check, if applicable, that the reference letter from the lead applicant's bank complies with the requirements set in chapter II.2.1.4 of the Interreg CE programme manual.
- Perform the financial viability test

The financial capacity test is differentiated according to the commercial/non-commercial nature of the private lead applicant and is performed according to the following ratios:

- Subvention rate;
- Liquidity rate;
- Net financial income;
- Operational profit.

The assessment work carried out by the expert is to be documented through the filling-in of one financial capacity assessment grid for each assessed project proposal having a private lead applicant. Each assessment is to be accompanied by a reasoned and objective statement in English language on whether the private lead applicant fulfils or not the applicable financial capacity. The template of the financial capacity assessment grid will be made available by the MA/JS.

The assessment work will be done remotely by the expert (at the premises of the expert). Selected experts have to use their own IT tools.



The number of project proposals that will be assigned by the MA/JS to an expert may vary depending on the thematic scope and number of proposals received having a private lead applicant.

The assessment of the assigned applications has to be performed and finalised (i.e. submission of filled-in financial capacity assessment grids) according to a time schedule agreed with the MA/JS.

4. Required expertise and selection criteria

Experts will be selected against the following requirements:

- Holding a university degree, preferably in matters of business administration;
- Having 7 or more years of professional experience (following the award of the university degree) in matters related to enterprises' financial performance and liability assessment, in one or more Member States participating in the Interreg CE Programme. The inscription to a national register and/or association of business consultants relevant for this assignment would be an advantage;
- Having experience with the analysis of balance sheets, profit and loss accounts, reclassified annual accounts and audit reports;
- Having proven capability of assessing the financial capacity and soundness of private organizations (profit and non-profit); assessment experience in this respect under EU Structural Funds programmes and/or under programmes directly managed by the European Commission would be an advantage;
- Having excellent analytical and judgment skills;
- Being fluent in speaking, reading and writing in English and in another language of the Interreg CE programme area;
- Being computer literate (namely proficient with Word and Excel).

5. Procedure

Application

Applications may be submitted at any time, however there will be cut-off dates for participating in the selection of experts for each call for proposals. The cut-off dates will be communicated on the programme website under the jobs and tenders page: www.interreg-central.eu/jobs. Applications submitted after this date will be considered only for the assessment of subsequent calls for project proposals.

Applications can only be submitted via the online expert portal available at the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/financialexperts>

Interested applicants shall fill in the online questionnaire and upload their CV. To ensure completeness of information, applicants are encouraged to use the European Europass CV format¹. If the application is incomplete, (i.e. non-provision of compulsory information or missing CV) or if provided in other languages than English, it will not be considered for selection.

¹ <https://europa.eu/europass/en>



The application will remain valid until the closure of the call for experts (i.e. end of the year 2025). If needed, experts can re-submit an updated application at a later stage.

The submission of an application in the Interreg CE expert portal does not guarantee that an expert will be selected. The selection of experts will depend on programme needs.

Selection

Experts will be selected by the MA/JS against the selection criteria specified under § 4. The procedure will be objective and follow the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities. The MA/JS will to the possible extent seek a gender balanced selection of experts in terms of geographical diversity and gender.

The selected experts will be contacted by the MA/JS inquiring about their availability to participate in the assessment of the financial capacity of private lead applicants prior to their actual appointment. Experts will need to confirm the absence of conflict of interest (see §7).

Contracting

The MA will establish a contract with each selected, laying down the details regarding the assignment (e.g. tasks and working arrangements, payment).

6. Fee

The expert is entitled to a fee of EUR 300 (VAT excluded) for each financial capacity assessment carried out according to the tasks listed under § 3.

7. Independence and confidentiality

To ensure the independence of the assessment to be performed in her/his capacity as “independent expert”, prior to the signature of the contract the selected expert will have to sign a declaration certifying that there is no conflict of interest at the time of contracting and that she/he undertakes to inform the MA/JS if any conflict should arise in the course of the assessment.

A conflict of interest exists if the impartial and objective function of an assessor is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life or political affinity, economic interest or any other shared interest with the project applicants.

Throughout the assessment process, and for the following five years following the completion of the assignment, the expert must ensure the confidentiality of the information and documents provided by the MA/JS for performing the tasks contracted.

Such independence and confidentiality shall be confirmed by the selected expert by signing an ad-hoc declaration.



8. Contact

In case of questions or inquiries regarding the call for financial experts, please address info@interreg-central.eu.