



Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Strategic Call for Capitalisation (Fourth Call)

Specifications and Requirements for the Call

29.09.2025

1. Preamble

This document outlines the terms and conditions that apply specifically to the strategic call for capitalisation of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. Further information on rules and requirements to be observed when applying for Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE funding can be found in the [programme manual](#). **The knowledge of both, this document and the programme manual, is essential for developing and submitting a project proposal.**

This document is part of the “**Application Package for the Strategic Call for Capitalisation**”, which is available at this [link](#). The application package consists of:

- a. Terms of Reference (ToR) for the call (this document);
- b. Offline template of the application form, providing guidance on how to fill in the application form;
- c. Lead Partner and Project Partner declaration templates;
- d. Simplified financial statement (relevant only for private lead applicants).

Additional information and guidance on the application process can be found in video tutorials and other support measures developed by the programme with the aim of supporting applicants in designing and submitting their project proposals (see also § 12 in this respect).

2. Background and objective of the call

Central Europe is a complex **functional area** characterised not only by geographical proximity of countries but also by spatial interactions and functional linkages in various sectors of the economy, governance and public policies. The area is crossed by **15 national borders** and many more **internal borders** that hamper functional flows and the overall development of the area.

The objective of the strategic call for capitalisation is:

To reduce the effects of borders on flows and functional linkages among central European regions, for a more competitive and resilient central Europe.

Project proposals can be submitted under **all four programme priorities** and **nine specific objectives**. The description of programme priorities and specific objectives, together with examples of actions supported, is available in chapter 2 of the adopted [Interreg Programme \(IP\) document](#), as well as in chapter I.2.2 of the [programme manual](#).



Projects funded through this call are to be regarded as “**operations of strategic importance**”¹, significantly contributing to the programme’s objectives by building on existing knowledge, supporting policy uptake and fostering cooperation among key actors to achieve lasting impact. These projects shall therefore comply with specific communication requirements which are described in § 7 of this document.

3. Approach of the call

This section sets out general principles regarding capitalisation and synergies. More detailed requirements and recommended features can be found in § 4 of this document.

3.1. Approach to capitalisation

To achieve the objective of the call, projects shall **jointly capitalise** existing Interreg transnational and cross-border cooperation (CBC) outputs and results.² The term “capitalisation” is broadly accepted as the “transfer and reuse of knowledge generated by Interreg projects”.³ In the context of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, the term capitalisation is further narrowed down as:

Any action that builds on promising outputs and results already achieved by previously funded projects in the concerned central European regions, in view of **strengthening their impact**. Capitalisation therefore goes beyond a mere duplication of existing outputs and results. Existing 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**.

The capitalisation of existing outputs and results can be pursued through two different approaches:

- **Upstreaming:** Existing outputs and results are taken up and tailored in a way that policy makers can address border issues through new or improved territorial or thematic policies and strategies. This should happen at the most appropriate governance level (i.e., European, national, regional, or local).
- **Down-streaming:** Existing outputs and results are tailored in a way that they can be further rolled out where they are needed the most. Such roll-out could be “territorial” in case the adapted outputs and results are applied in other regions and for target groups facing similar issues; or “sectoral” when the adapted outputs and results are applied to other sectors than the ones initially addressed.

Both approaches are complementary and **a combination of the two in one strategic project for capitalisation is possible** (but not mandatory).

3.2. Approach to synergies

To effectively influence policies (upstreaming) or better roll out the results at the territorial and sectoral levels (down-streaming), strategic projects for capitalisation shall mobilise a critical mass of existing outputs and results. They have to further develop, improve, or adapt existing outputs and results, making use of

¹ As defined in appendix 3 of the adopted [IP document](#).

² The definition of outputs and results is provided in chapter I.3.2 and annex 1 of the [programme manual](#).

³ Source: [INTERACT](#).



experiences of several projects, thus increasing outreach, visibility, and political attention, as well as reinforcing existing networks.

Above all, projects have to demonstrate how they **will create synergies and add value to what was already achieved**, going beyond a mere pooling or duplication of existing outputs and results.

4. Requirements and features of the strategic projects for capitalisation

Requirements and recommended features of strategic projects for capitalisation are outlined in the following table.

Table 1: Features of strategic projects for capitalisation

Scope	Strategic projects for capitalisation have to clearly contribute to the aim of the call, i.e. to reduce the effects of borders on flows and functional linkages among central European regions, and they shall focus on one of the programme specific objectives (see § 2). Furthermore, projects must be result-oriented, leading to a clear and concrete uptake of existing outputs and results, generating impact and effects for the benefit of wider areas, beyond border regions.
Intervention logic	<p>Strategic projects for capitalisation can apply the full set of output types defined by the programme (strategies and action plans, pilot actions, solutions and cooperations - see also chapter 1.3.3 of the programme manual), as the classic projects.</p> <p>The following specifications apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects aiming at upstreaming of outputs and results should mainly focus on the implementation of strategies and action plans, while projects aiming at down-streaming should mainly focus on the implementation of pilot actions and solutions. Projects should, already at their early implementation stage, further develop and test existing outputs and results, therefore preparatory activities (studies or analyses) should be limited. With their activities, projects should tackle factors that have so far limited the full use of existing outputs and results, thus bridging the gap between existing outputs and results and their effective integration into policies or their territorial or thematic roll-out for the benefit of central Europe. <p>Communication should not be the main focus of a project, however the project shall comply with communication requirements set for “operations of strategic importance”, as further outlined in § 7.</p>
Synergies	<p>As a minimum requirement, projects must explicitly take up existing outputs and results from at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 projects funded by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme 2021-2027, within the first and second call for proposals;⁴ and 2 projects funded by Interreg CBC programmes addressing the internal central European borders, listed in annex 1.⁵ <p><u>Project proposals failing in meeting the above minimum requirements will be regarded as not eligible and will be rejected.</u></p> <p>In addition to the above, and if relevant for the scope of the project and the overall aim of the call, strategic projects for capitalisation may also take up the following (not exhaustive list):</p>

⁴ Information on projects funded by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme 2021-2027, including lists and descriptions of the respective outputs and results, can be found on <https://www.interreg-central.eu/project-gateway/>.

⁵ Interreg CBC projects to be capitalised might be funded in the 2021-2027 period or, if relevant, also in the 2014-2020 period. Information on funded Interreg CBC projects is available on <https://keep.eu/>.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs and results of relevant projects funded by other programmes (e.g., Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 Programme, other Interreg transnational programmes, Interreg CBC programmes at the external borders of central Europe, mainstreaming programmes); Knowledge and tools that address border obstacles of internal central European borders, developed within the b-solutions initiative of the European Commission.⁶ <p>Overall, strategic projects for capitalisation should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep a “qualitative” rather than a “quantitative” approach, striving for a good balance between using knowledge and experiences of several projects and keeping the focus only on outputs and results that are relevant for the addressed challenges and needs; Aim at capitalising outputs and results from earlier projects that will be either completed or in an advanced stage of development, when starting implementation (Autumn 2026). <p>Applicants shall clearly describe in section C.2.6 of the application form the outputs and results to be capitalised as well as the respective projects and funding programmes.</p>
Duration	The project duration should be between 18 up to maximum 24 months .
Budget	The project total budget is limited to EUR 1.250.000 , corresponding to a maximum of EUR 1.000.000 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) . Project proposals with a higher budget are not eligible for funding.

5. Eligible applicants

The following organisations can apply for funding:

- National, regional and local public bodies⁷;
- Private institutions, including private companies, having legal personality (i.e. having the ability to acquire rights, incur liabilities, sue and be sued);
- International organisations acting under the national law of an EU Member State;
- International organisations acting under international law, with restrictions.

Any of the eligible applicants, with the exception of international organisations acting under international law, can take the lead partner role as long as it is located in the programme area or it qualifies as “assimilated partner” (for the definition of assimilated partner, please refer to chapter I.3.1.1 of the [programme manual](#)).

Private lead applicants must comply with **minimum financial capacity requirements** in order to be eligible as lead partners. Project proposals submitted by private lead applicants that do not meet the necessary financial capacity criteria will be rejected.

⁶ A compendium of b-solutions that, at the date of publishing this document, address border obstacles of internal central European borders is available in the application package, which is available at this [link](#).

⁷ Including “Public equivalent bodies”, i.e. bodies governed by public law as defined in Article 2(4) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement fall under this category, as well as including EGTCs established in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 as amended.



6. Partnership features

6.1. Transnationality

As a **minimum requirement**, the partnership must involve:

- At least three financing partners;
- From at least three countries; and
- At least two of the partners located in Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE regions.

A European Group of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)⁸ is eligible as sole beneficiary provided that the above-mentioned minimum requirements are fulfilled. For an EGTC to be eligible as sole beneficiary, it must be established in one of the nine Member States participating in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

Applicants located outside the programme area but within the EU can also apply for funding as project partners, however such partners shall bring a clear benefit to the programme area. Their involvement is considered as exceptional and must be duly justified.

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

6.2. Partnership composition

In line with the overall aim of the call, it is recommended that the project partnership is:

- Composed of:
 - Organisations that were actively participating⁹ in earlier Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects that will be capitalised; and
 - Organisations that were actively participating¹⁰ in Interreg cross-border cooperation projects that will be capitalised.

A same institution could also represent more than one of the projects to be capitalised.

- **Owning the outputs and results being capitalised**, or at least **holding the rights** to use them for the purposes of their capitalisation.
- Including **additional organisations** that can facilitate the upstreaming or down-streaming of existing outputs and results (e.g. public actors in charge of policies, organisations representing the new territories or sectors addressed).

The number of partners shall reflect the scope of the project and be related to activities foreseen in the work plan. Accordingly, there is **no recommended size of the partnership**.

⁸ Established in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 as amended.

⁹ An organisation is “actively participating” in an Interreg project when it is not only formally involved in the project, but it also contributes to its activities.

¹⁰ Ditto.



7. Communication requirements

Given that strategic projects for capitalisation are to be regarded as “operations of strategic importance” (see § 2), they shall comply with specific communication requirements set by the European Commission for these projects for ensuring high visibility and engagement.¹¹

In addition to branding and visibility requirements outlined in chapter I.4.4.2 of the [programme manual](#), projects shall:

- **Organise at least one communication event** involving the programme managing authority and representatives of the European Commission in a timely manner.
- **Contribute to joint programme-level communication activities**, such as events, campaigns, or thematic publications.

Strategic projects for capitalisation will be closely monitored by the programme, examining their implementation progress and strategic contribution.

8. Budget of the call

The indicative allocation of ERDF budget to the call amounts to around **23 million EUR**, with an indicative breakdown between the nine programme specific objectives as presented in Table 2. When selecting projects to be funded, the total ERDF allocation and the breakdown per specific objective may be adapted by the monitoring committee according to programme needs.

Table 2: Indicative ERDF allocation per specific objective

Programme priorities and specific objectives (SO)	Indicative ERDF budget (million EUR)
Priority 1: Cooperating for a smarter central Europe	
SO 1.1 Innovation capacities	3,6
SO 1.2 Smart skills	1,8
Priority 2: Cooperating for a greener central Europe	
SO 2.1 Clean energy transition	2,7
SO 2.2 Climate change resilience	3,4
SO 2.3 Circular economy	2,7
SO 2.4 Environment	3,4
SO 2.5 Green urban mobility	1,8
Priority 3: Cooperating for a better connected central Europe	
SO 3.1 Improving rural and peripheral transport	1,8
Priority 4: Improving governance for cooperation in central Europe	
SO 4.1 Governance for integrated territorial development	1,8
Total	23

¹¹ In line with Article 50(1)(e) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and Article 36(4)(e) of Regulation 2021/1059. See also the Commission’s guideline [Communicating Operations of Strategic Importance in 2021-2027 - A practical toolbox](#) (February 2024).



The availability of funds allocated to the call partly relies on **savings generated by projects funded in previous calls** as well as on the acceptance by the European Commission of a modification of the financial tables in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE [IP document](#).

The ERDF co-financing rate is 80%. Beneficiaries shall ensure the necessary contribution to finance their activities.

The ERDF co-financing budget may be reduced in case of State aid relevance of project activities, in compliance with relevant rules on the matter (see also chapter I.4.4.3 of the [programme manual](#)). Moreover, in the specific case of ERDF budget granted to partners as State aid under the General Block Exemption Regulation, and where Value-Added Tax (VAT) is recoverable under national VAT legislation, **eligible costs incurred on a real-cost basis will be reimbursed net of VAT**.

9. Selection of proposals

9.1. Formal and administrative compliance check

In line with chapter II.4.1 of the [programme manual](#) and the specific requirements set in § 4 of this document, in order to be eligible for funding project proposals have to meet the following formal and administrative requirements:

- The proposal (application form, declarations and - where applicable - additional documents for private lead applicants, as specified below) has to be submitted via Jems before the deadline set in § 11 of this document.
- The submitted application form has to be filled out in all its parts in English language.
- The signed lead partner declaration has to be submitted using the lead partner declaration template provided by the programme.¹²
- The partner declaration has to be submitted using the project partner declaration template provided by the programme.¹³
- For private lead applicants, the following documents have to be submitted:¹⁴
 - Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE simplified financial statement;
 - Balance sheets and profit and loss accounts of the last two financial years;
 - Audit report issued by an approved external auditor, OR a reference letter from the bank fulfilling the requirements set in chapter II.2.1.4 of the [programme manual](#).
- The project proposal has to comply with the minimum requirement on synergies as indicated in § 4 in this document.¹⁵

¹² In case the signed lead partner declaration is submitted on the wrong templates, the lead applicant will be asked to provide the amended document(s) via email not later than 5 working days after the date of the written request from the programme.

¹³ In case any of the project partner declarations are submitted on the wrong templates, the lead applicant will be asked to provide the amended document(s) via email not later than 5 working days after the date of the written request from the programme.

¹⁴ For detailed information on requirements applicable to private lead applicants, please refer to chapter II.2.1.4 of the [programme manual](#). In case any of the listed documents are not submitted, the lead applicant will be asked to provide the amended document(s) via email not later than 5 working days after the date of the written request from the programme.

¹⁵ The compliance with this requirement will be verified on the basis of information included in section C.2.6 of the application form.



Proposals that fail to meet any of the above formal and administrative requirements, or do not submit correct(ed) declaration(s) or missing document(s) within the given timeframe, will be regarded as ineligible and will be rejected.

Lead applicants will be notified about the outcome of the formal administrative compliance checks after the respective monitoring committee decisions.

9.2. Selection process

Project proposals which successfully pass the formal and administrative compliance check and, if applicable, the financial capacity check of the private lead applicant (see also chapters II.4.1 and II.4.2 of the [programme manual](#)) enter the quality assessment.

Eligible project proposals will be selected for funding after the quality assessment of the submitted applications, based on a standardised procedure that safeguards the principles of transparency and equal treatment (see below).

In parallel to the quality assessment, a State aid assessment of proposals likely to be funded is conducted in order to identify any potential State aid relevance of project proposals and of the related partners.

Project proposals will be selected by the programme monitoring committee **at the level of each programme specific objective**, on the basis of the results of the quality assessment.

Lead applicants will be notified about the outcome of the selection process after the respective monitoring committee decisions.

For further information on the assessment process, please refer to chapter II.4 of the [programme manual](#).

Quality assessment

The quality assessment of proposals is performed against the selection criteria and guiding questions outlined in Table 4 using the scoring scale as in Table 3.

Table 3: Scoring scale used for the desk assessment of proposals

Appraisal of desk assessment	Explanation
5 “excellent”	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. The provided information is clear and coherent. Any shortcomings are minor.
4 “good”	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a small number of shortcomings is present.
3 “adequate”	The proposal addresses the criterion to a sufficient level, but some aspects have not been met fully or are not explained in full clarity or detail.
2 “insufficient”	The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are serious shortcomings and/or the provided information is of low quality.
1 “poor”	The criterion is inadequately addressed by the proposal, or the required information is missing.

Selection criteria are grouped in two categories: Strategic (“Relevance” and “Partnership”) and Operational (“Implementation”). More information can be found in chapter II.4.5 of the [programme manual](#) and in Table 4 below.



Table 4: Selection criteria and guiding questions

Criteria		Guiding questions
STRATEGIC	Relevance 40%	<p><u>Thematic, territorial, and policy relevance, intervention logic and transnationality (20%)</u></p> <p>Thematic and territorial relevance and transnationality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How relevant is the project proposal in relation to the achievement of the targeted programme specific objective and the expected result? How relevant is the project proposal for the common territorial challenges, joint assets and needs of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme area, and in particular for the specific situation of the participating regions? Does the proposal put emphasis on the reduction of border effects? Is the importance of transnational cooperation for achieving the project objectives and results clearly demonstrated? Does it bring added value for the partnership and the involved territories? <p>Intervention logic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the project intervention logic (i.e. project specific objectives, outputs and expected results) clearly defined and consistent? <p>Policy relevance including horizontal principles (Sustainable development and environment protection, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination, Equality between men and women):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How clearly does the project proposal contribute to the relevant policy framework at different levels? How well does the proposal contribute to horizontal principles and integrate them in the project design? <p><u>Capitalisation and synergies (20%)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the approach for capitalising on existing outputs and results clearly demonstrated and justified, also specifying which features of existing outputs or results will be further developed or adjusted? Is it likely to increase the uptake of existing outputs and results at the policy (upstreaming) or territorial (down-streaming) levels? Is the innovativeness of the project proposal clearly demonstrated, and will it bring added value beyond what has already been achieved? If applicable, is the uptake of outputs and results of other projects and initiatives beyond the minimum requirements set by the call justified? Does it bring an added value in reaching the aim of the call?
	Partnership 30%	<p><u>Partnership relevance, coherence and competences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the partnership composition relevant and coherent with the project's territorial and thematic scope? Is the partnership composition reflecting the capitalisation approach by including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations that were actively participating in earlier Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects being capitalised and organisations that were actively participating in Interreg CBC projects being capitalised? Additional organisations contributing to the upstreaming or down-streaming of existing outputs and results? Does the partnership demonstrate sufficient competences and capacities to implement the planned activities in the targeted areas and achieve the expected results at the local and/or regional level? Does the partnership hold the ownership or rights to use the outputs and results to be capitalised? Do partners have a clear role and matching competences to fulfil their tasks? In case of partners outside the programme area, is the added value of their participation duly justified? Does the lead applicant have sufficient experience and capacity to manage a transnational cooperation project or is there a clear plan to acquire missing competences through e.g. additional staff or sub-contracting? <p><u>Transnational cooperation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well does the partnership reflect the transnational cooperation dimension and is it geographically balanced?



Criteria		Guiding questions
OPERATIONAL	Implementation 30%	<p><u>Methodology and work plan (20%)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the methodology suitable to obtain the planned outputs and results? Are the work plan and timing of activities, deliverables and outputs realistic, consistent and transparent? Is the joint development and/or implementation of outputs well demonstrated? In case of investments, are they clearly relevant for reaching the project objectives? Do they have a clear transnational and pilot character? Are communication activities planned in the work plan relevant for achieving communication objectives and compliant with requirements set in the call ToR? How well are target groups (and other stakeholders including associated partners) actively involved in project activities? How well does the project proposal conceptualise the ownership/durability, long lasting effects and transferability of outputs and results? Does the management approach show good potential to secure a sound project management, coordination and risk mitigation?
		<p><u>Budget (10%)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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?

In order to help applicants in developing their project proposals, a complimentary self-assessment tool, which reflects the above assessment criteria and guiding questions, is available in the application package as well as at this [link](#).

10. Contracting of approved projects

Following the funding decision by the programme monitoring committee and, if applicable, upon successfully fulfilling conditions for approval set by the committee, a subsidy contract will be established between the managing authority and the lead partners of the selected proposals.

This subsidy contract will then constitute the legal framework for the implementation of the project. It will confirm the final ERDF budget commitment to the project, set out the conditions for support and outline implementing arrangements. The most recent version of the approved application form will form an integral part of the subsidy contract. A model of the subsidy contract is available at this [link](#).

The lead partner will have to establish legal arrangements for relations with all project partners in a partnership agreement. The partnership agreement will have to include provisions that, inter alia, guarantee the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the project, including arrangements for a recovery of amounts unduly paid. A model of the partnership agreement is also available at this [link](#).

11. Submission of proposals and deadline

The strategic call for capitalisation is organised in a “one-step” procedure.

Project proposals must be submitted in English language, only through the web-based joint electronic monitoring system (Jems) of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, which is available at <https://jems.interreg-central.eu>.



Project proposals must be submitted by lead applicants at the latest by:

Thursday, 27 November 2025 at 16:00 CET
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The application package contains also an offline template of the application form (for information purposes only). This template includes additional guidance for filling out the various sections.

The expected timeline for the MC decision on funding will be published on the programme website www.interreg-central.eu after the submission deadline.

12. Support to applicants

The programme offers the following support measures and tools to help applicants in submitting quality proposals:

- Applicant community for project idea exchanges and matchmaking
- Video explainers and tutorials to guide applicants through key steps and requirements
- Webinars covering cornerstones of the call and addressing applicants' questions
- Individual consultations with joint secretariat, for lead applicants to receive tailored feedback and guidance
- Regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Helpdesks for content, finance, communication and technical support
- National support by national contact points (NCPs)
- Tools for self-assessment and drafting

Please read chapter II.3 of the [programme manual](#) for more information and visit the “Support for applicants” section on our [programme website](#) for further details regarding all support measures.



Annex 1

List of Interreg cross-border programmes addressing internal borders of CENTRAL EUROPE

- Interreg A Austria-Czechia
- Interreg A Austria-Germany/Bavaria
- Interreg A Austria-Hungary
- Interreg A Czechia-Poland
- Interreg A Germany-Austria-Switzerland-Liechtenstein (Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein)
- Interreg A Germany/Bavaria-Czechia
- Interreg A Germany/Brandenburg-Poland
- Interreg A Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland
- Interreg A Germany/Saxony-Czechia
- Interreg A Hungary-Croatia
- Interreg A Hungary-Slovakia
- Interreg A Italy-Austria
- Interreg A Italy-Croatia
- Interreg A Italy-Slovenia
- Interreg A Poland-Denmark-Germany-Lithuania-Sweden (South Baltic)
- Interreg A Poland-Germany/Saxony
- Interreg A Poland-Slovakia
- Interreg A Slovakia-Austria
- Interreg A Slovakia-Czechia
- Interreg A Slovenia-Austria
- Interreg A Slovenia-Croatia
- Interreg A Slovenia-Hungary