



INTERREG ATLANTIC AREA

2021-2027

TERMS OF REFERENCE

3rd CALL FOR PROPOSALS: Traditional projects

Priority 1 - Blue innovation and competitiveness

Priority 2 - Blue/Green Environment

Priority 3 - Blue sustainable and social tourism & culture

Opening date: November 25th, 2024

Closing date: February 14th, 2025

Terms of reference - Third call for proposals

INTERREG ATLANTIC AREA 2021-2027 MISSION

The Interreg Atlantic Area Programme 2021-2027 is an EU transnational cooperation programme, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation objective of the EU Cohesion Policy. The Programme is anchored on several EU policy initiatives, including the European Blue Growth Strategy, the European Green Deal, the Territorial Agenda 2030 and the EU Atlantic Maritime Strategy.

The Programme's mission is to be at the forefront of the transition to a unique, carbon neutral and climate resilient Atlantic Area Region. The Programme will foster the integration of sustainable economic development, societal well-being, and the preservation of biodiversity.

For this purpose, it will bring together stakeholders from different sectors and regions to work on innovative and pioneering ideas and create benefits for those who live and work in the Atlantic Area.

The Programme partner states invest EUR 104 699 969 ERDF in the programming period 2021-2027 to co-finance transnational cooperation projects promoted by public and private organisations from the four Atlantic Area countries.

The Atlantic Area covers the western part of the Atlantic Ocean. It includes all regions of Ireland and Portugal, as well as several French and Spanish regions close to or on the Atlantic Ocean coast. The total list of NUTS2 regions included in the Programme is as follows:

- France : Bretagne, Normandie, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Pays de la Loire.
- Ireland: Northern and Western, Southern, Eastern and Midland.
- Portugal: Norte, Algarve, Centro, Lisboa, Alentejo, Região Autónoma das Açores, Região Autónoma de Madeira;
- Spain: País Vasco, Navarra, La Rioja, Cantabria, Principado de Asturias, Galicia, Andalucía, Islas Canarias.

ATLANTIC AREA CHALLENGES

Transnational cooperation is key to address the global challenges faced by European countries. Indeed, Europe is facing several ongoing mega-trends such as climate change and digitalisation. Their acceleration effects economies and societies and demands adequate responses from stakeholders working across borders.

Even though the area is already experiencing climate change direct impacts through extreme weather events, the impacts on ecosystems, territories and economies are often uncertain. The

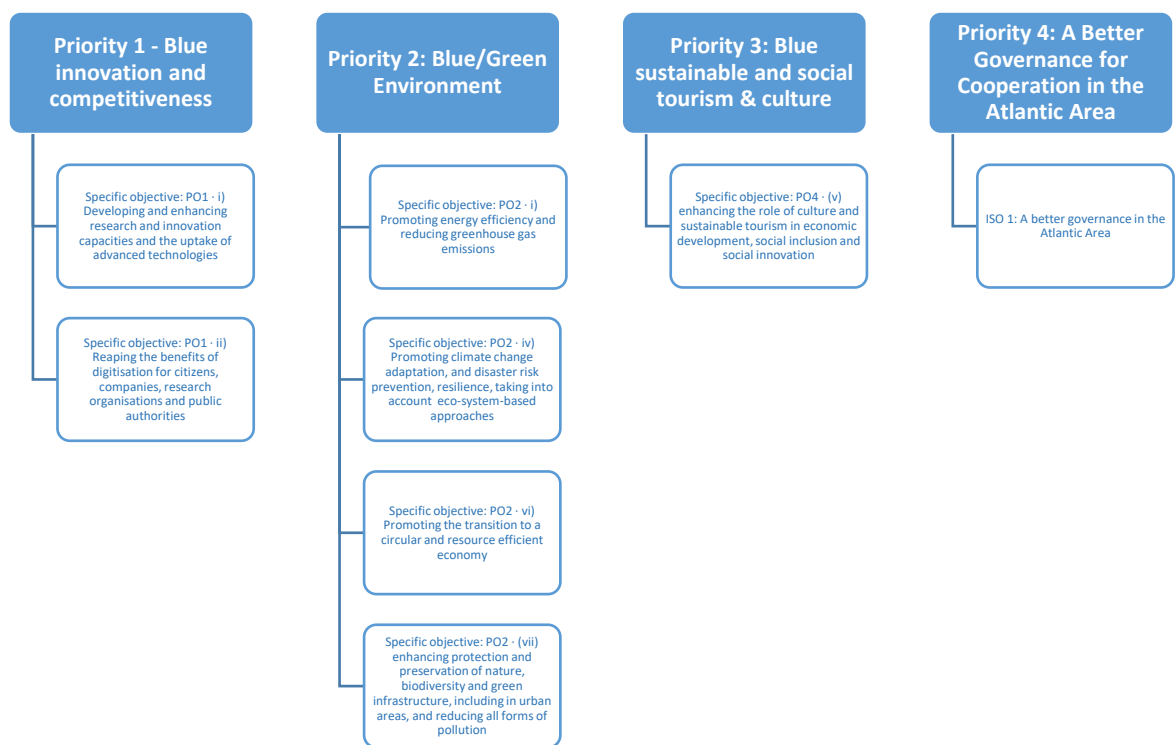
implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures are amongst the priorities of public and civil society organisations.

Due to its geographical and maritime characteristics, the Atlantic Area is in constant evolution and subject to challenges that are common to all the regions that are part of the Programme.

The Atlantic Area is a maritime territory. This characteristic, together with the coast-hinterland interrelationships, corresponds to a major approach to the Programme's conception. In addition, the cooperation area is located within the EU Atlantic Maritime Strategy, so the development of synergies between the Programme and this strategy is highly recommended to complement efforts and achieve more powerful results, with hopefully a more significant impact on the public policies level.

In this sense, the Atlantic Maritime Strategy and its [Atlantic Action Plan 2.0](#) published in July 2020 have been considered.

The Interreg Atlantic Area Programme’s strategy for the period 2021-2027 is developed through selected priorities and specific objectives presented in the image below:



For a detailed description of the contents of each priority and specific objectives, including information on the main challenges, type of actions, and the expected contribution to the Atlantic Strategy, please refer to the [Interreg Atlantic Area Programme](#) and [Programme Manual](#).

All projects are expected to address the above-mentioned issues and contribute to innovative solutions. Through their activities, projects are expected to contribute to reaching the objectives of the Programme. The approaches can be new, even experimental, since the Programme is

particularly suited for testing new methods in a transnational network. Transnational cooperation projects bring together project partners from the four countries participating in the Programme, to work on a shared challenge and achieve innovative solutions that can be applied transnationally, regionally or locally. The development of these joint solutions requires enthusiasm and commitment during project development and implementation. Transnational cooperation enables the establishment of strong and lasting ties with partners in other Atlantic Area regions.

Projects financed by the Atlantic Area Programme must demonstrate **high transnational cooperation intensity** throughout their lifetime with a **clear focus on results**. This means that partners must work together to deliver, disseminate and roll-out the results of their project.

Moreover, a particular emphasis will be placed on promoting partnerships involving a high diversity of actors covering the **quadruple helix approach**, including the **relevant social and civil society actors, to achieve better linkages between public, private and research actors**.

Applicants and final approved projects must be aware of the need to collaborate with the future ISO 1 “Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance project” linked to Priority 4, by providing information, responding to this project's eventual requests or invitations to attend joint events, which will be implemented throughout the 2021-2027 programming period. For more information, please refer to the [link](#).

These terms of reference address the 3 thematic priorities only.

Applicants need to keep in mind the following keystones:

- For this Call, the total project budget should preferentially be between EUR 1 and 3.5 million.
- Projects will be co-financed and reimbursed up to 75%.
- The maximum duration is 30 months, with the possibility of extending to 36 months if duly justified.
- Projects must include at least one partner from each Member State from, at least, one of the AA programme cooperation area regions.
- Should involve 4 to 12 full partners maximum.

Project applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the reference values as outlined above. Deviations may be accepted in well-justified cases only.

THIRD CALL – traditional projects

The Third call for proposals intends to select high quality transnational projects, in which relevant organisations cooperate to make regions more resilient to common challenges that know no borders, and which cannot be solved alone. Within the Third call, project proposals can be submitted under the three thematic Programme priorities and seven specific objectives. The description of Programme priorities and objectives, together with the type of actions, is provided in Programme documents and can be found on the [Programme website](#).

Applicants need to submit the application form through the SIGI platform. Guidance on how to fill out the application form is available in the application kit presented on the [Programme website](#).

Types of projects supported and timeline

For this third call, the Programme will support the submission of traditional projects for thematic priorities (priorities 1, 2 and 3).

Third call - 2024 (to be launched on 25th November 2024) - **41,19% ERDF** of the Programme budget will be allocated to thematic priorities – which corresponds to **€ 43 124 044,17 ERDF**. This allocation may be adjusted by the Monitoring Committee (MC) in line with the needs of the Programme:

Priority	Call 3 - Available ERDF
Priority Objective 1: Blue innovation and competitiveness	8 799 258,27 €
Priority Objective 2 : Blue /Green environment	24 797 478,36 €
Priority Objective 3 : Blue sustainable and social tourism & culture	9 527 307,54 €

Eligible Lead Partners for the third call for proposals are:

Lead Partner organisations can be public bodies, universities, education and research organisations, private institutions (not-for-profit) and international organisations acting under national law.

The Lead Partner must be in the Programme eligible area

HOW TO APPLY

The project application follows a one-step procedure.

Applicants need to submit the application form through the SIGI platform. Guidance on how to complete the application form is available on the application pack included on the Programme website (link not available yet).

Application Pack

The application pack for the call is available on the Programme website and includes the following:

- [Atlantic Area Programme](#).(priorities and thematic objectives)
- The present Terms of Reference.
- [Programme Manual](#).(eligibility rules)

- [3rd Call for proposals Guidelines](#).
- [Documents](#) (listed in Annex I of this document).

Project applicants who would like to submit a proposal must complete the application form in English (mandatory). The use of other Programme working languages is optional.

Furthermore, the following advice for the project development and application should be considered:

- Read carefully the [Atlantic Area Programme](#), as all project proposals are required to identify the priority and specific objective, to which they will contribute to.
- Read the [Programme manual](#).
- Contact the [Atlantic Area Joint Secretariat](#) or [National Authorities](#) in your country for more information.

Discover the projects results already delivered by the Atlantic Area Programme on the [website](#).

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS, ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

Training will be provided by the Joint Secretariat and, eventually, the Member States to successful applicants in relation to effective project implementation throughout the programming period, including training and Q&A sessions, manuals, etc.

Assessment of project proposals

The eligibility check will be carried out to verify whether an application meets the minimum criteria established by the AA Programme (below). Proposals not fulfilling one of these conditions will be considered ineligible and will not be further processed. Eligible proposals will go under quality assessment.

Eligibility criteria

Check that an application meets the criteria set by the Programme to be eligible for assessment.
Please refer to 3rd Call guidelines:

The JS performs checks to confirm that the information provided is correct (consistency of the information declared in the AF).

	Eligibility criteria	Description
1	All applicable sections of the application form are correctly completed in English and filled in with the requested information.	All fields in the application form are mandatory. If they are not duly completed the application will be considered not eligible.
2	The project fulfils minimum requirements for the partnership.	The application must involve at least 4 partners from 4 different AA countries and eligible regions: France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain.
3	The Lead Partner of the submitted proposal is a public, non-profit or governed by public law (public	The Lead Partner has selected Non-profit in the application form. 'Profit making' organisations can never be Lead Partner. Application forms

	equivalent body, according to the public procurement law) located in the eligible territory to the Programme.	with such a Lead Partner are ineligible. It is located in the AA eligible area (Partners from outside the AA Programme eligible area are not allowed to be Lead Partner.).
4	Documents requested have been provided by all the partners. These are signed and attached to the application form, such as Lead Partner and partner statements.	Partners must provide all the compulsory documents referred in the Annex I of this Terms of Reference. Documents that are not fully completed and signed will not be accepted.

AF (Application Form)

Project proposals failing to meet at least one of the requirements above will be deemed not eligible for the quality assessment.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Quality Assessment Criteria - CALL 3 - 2021-2027		Weight
Strategic assessment criteria		65%
Project relevance according to the call goals and expectations		20
Cooperation added value, increasing coordination and dialogue with relevant stakeholders in the AA		20
Project intervention logic		10
Partnership		15
Operational assessment criteria		35%
Work plan		15
Communication, synergies and complementarities, and Risk management		10
Budget		10
Assessment total:		100%

After the assessment, all the proposals will be ranked according to their final technical overall score. A final decision on project approval or rejection is taken by the MC.

TIMELINE

The call will be open for 12 weeks, from November 25th, 2024, to February 14th 2025 at 13:00 Lisbon time. Results should be communicated to candidates circa 5 months after submission.

The following timeline is valid for the case in which up to 100 project proposals are received for assessment. If more applications are received, the assessment period will be extended proportionally and published on the Programme website soon after the submission deadline.



KEY STEPS	DATES
Opening of the call	November 25 th , 2024
Info session	November 28 th , 2024
Info Session	January 8 th , 2025
Closure	February 14 th , 2025 (13:00, Lisbon time)
Eligibility checks and proposals assessment by the JS	Mid-February to end June 2025
Selection and approval by the MC	During June-July 2024 (date to be defined).
Contracting procedures	From July onwards
Starting date	From MC decision on June-July 2025

Annex I

List of documents that must be uploaded on the SIGI platform in the application phase:

- Lead partner declaration;
- Partner declaration;
- Associated partners declaration (if applicable);
- Legal representative (the person who signs has the legal capacity);
- Legal entity appointed representative (LEAR) when the legal representative name another person to be the legal (if applicable);
- Legal Entity Public law Body;
- Solvency declaration (if applicable);
- VAT statement;
- Bank statement;
- Beneficial Owner Declaration;
- Declaration of compliance with the do no significant harm (DNSH);
- State-Aid Statement;
- Only for SME self-assessment questionnaire (for confirmation purposes only, link available [here](#)).

Note: All the documents are available [here](#).