

Announcement from the Managing Authority establishing the terms for the first call for proposals under the Territorial Cooperation Programme INTERREG VI-D Madeira-Azores-Canary Islands (MAC) 2021-2027

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1. INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation objective (Interreg) with support from the European Regional Development Fund, states in Article 3 that the objective of Interreg is to support the cooperation of the outermost regions with each other and with Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) or with third countries or neighbouring partners, or with regional integration and cooperation organisations, or with several of them, in order to facilitate their regional integration and harmonious development in their neighbourhood (Interreg D).

In this context, the European Territorial Cooperation Programme Interreg MAC 2021-2027 is part of Strand 4 (Interreg D) in accordance with Article 3.4 of the above-mentioned Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021.

Strengthening cooperation between the outermost regions (ORs) and neighbouring countries has been a fundamental pillar of the European Union's (EU) strategy for these regions since 2004. This strategy has been renewed and reinforced to adapt it to the current situation and challenges through the European Commission's Communication "Putting people first, ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth and unlocking the potential of the EU's outermost regions", adopted on 3 May 2022. In it, the priorities for EU action in support of the ORs' recovery and sustainable and inclusive growth include cooperation with other European regions, with neighbouring countries and across borders, with a particular focus on Interreg and cooperation with Global Europe.

The Interreg MAC Territorial Cooperation Programme has been consolidated in recent decades as the main instrument to promote the regional integration of these regions in their geographical areas of reference, highlighting the importance of regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations to promote sustainable economic development and strengthen political stability.

In this regulatory context, the outermost regions of the Canary Islands, Azores and Madeira and the Member States of Spain and Portugal submitted the INTERREG VI-D Madeira-Açores-Canary Islands (MAC) Cooperation Programme for the period 2021-2027, which was approved by the European Commission by Decision C(2022) 6877 of 21 September 2022.

The territorial scope of the Programme includes Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe and Senegal, countries that have accepted to be part of the OMC cooperation area in the period 2021-2027.

The Monitoring Committee of the Programme has approved the present rules for the first call on 4th July 2023.

2. PURPOSE OF THE CALL

The aim of this first call for proposals is to promote the submission of applications for cooperation projects, on a competitive basis, within the framework of the INTERREG VI-D MAC 2021-2027 Programme, in accordance with these rules, in order to obtain ERDF funding.

The actions envisaged will be subject to the provisions of the European regulations on the Structural Funds and the programme approved by the European Commission.

Each application must fall under one of the Specific Objectives of Priorities 1, 2 and 4 (Smart MAC, Green MAC and MAC Mobility) of the Programme, demonstrating its contribution to the expected results and indicators:

PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES		
P1	SMART MAC	IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF ENTERPRISES THROUGH INNOVATIVE AND SMART ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION
SO 1.1	Development and enhancement of research and innovation capacities and the deployment of advanced technologies	
SO 1.3	Strengthening sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including through productive investments.	
P2	MAC GREEN	ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION, SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GREEN AND BLUE ECONOMY, COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE, RISK AND DISASTER PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT
SO 2.1	Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions	
SO 2.2	Promotion of renewable energies in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, in particular the sustainability criteria detailed therein.	
SO 2.4	Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches	
SO 2.6	Promoting the transition to a circular and resource-efficient economy	
SO 2.7	Promotion of the protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and the reduction of all forms of pollution.	
P4	MAC MOBILITY	IMPROVED MIGRATION MANAGEMENT AT ORIGIN AND DESTINATION
IEO2	Mobility and migration management	

3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

3.1. Territorial scope

The ERDF assistance available may be implemented throughout the eligible territory of the Programme:

- Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands.
- Autonomous Region of Madeira.
- Autonomous Region of the Azores.
- Third African partner countries: Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe and Senegal.

In addition, ERDF beneficiaries may also incur expenditure for the implementation of projects in any other territory, inside or outside the European Union, provided that such operations contribute to the objectives of the OMC Programme (Article 37.1 of the Interreg Regulation). Where all or part of an operation is implemented outside the programme area inside or outside the Union, the selection of that operation shall require the express approval of the Managing Authority in the framework of the relevant Steering Committee meeting.

3.2. Time scope

Project expenditure shall be eligible from the date of approval of the Programme by the European Commission (21 September 2022) until the date of completion of each project as set out in the relevant ERDF grant contract concluded between the Managing Authority and the Lead Partner.

The maximum implementation period for projects is 48 months from the date of signature of the ERDF grant contract.

The Steering Committee may grant, during the life of the projects, only one extension of a maximum duration of 12 months per project, provided that the need for the extension is duly justified.

4. FINANCIAL ENVELOPE

The ERDF support allocated to this call amounts to €78,771,200 (corresponding to 60% of the funding available for projects under priorities 1, 2 and 4).

The financial distribution by Priorities and Specific Objectives is as follows:

PRIORITIES and SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES			ERDF call (€)	TOTAL COST of call (€)
SO 1.1	Development and enhancement of research and innovation capacities and the deployment of advanced technologies		23.168.000	27.256.470
SO 1.3	Strengthening sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including through productive investments.		13.900.800	16.353.883
TOTAL P1	SMART MAC	IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF ENTERPRISES THROUGH ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION INNOVATIVE AND INTELLIGENT	37.068.800	43.610.353
SO 2.1	Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions		4.633.600	5.451.294
SO 2.2	Promotion of renewable energies in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, in particular the sustainability criteria detailed therein.		4.633.600	5.451.294
SO 2.4	Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches		9.267.200	10.902.588
SO 2.6	Promoting the transition to a circular and resource-efficient economy		9.267.200	10.902.588
SO 2.7	Promotion of the protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and the reduction of all forms of pollution.		9.267.200	10.902.589
TOTAL P2	MAC GREEN	ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION, SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GREEN AND BLUE ECONOMY, COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE, RISK AND DISASTER PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT	37.068.800	43.610.353
IEO2	Mobility and migration management		4.633.600	5.451.294
TOTAL P4	MAC MOBILITY	IMPROVING MIGRATION MANAGEMENT AT ORIGIN AND DESTINATION	4.633.600	5.451.294
TOTAL CALL			78.771.200	92.672.000

The ERDF co-financing rate of the programme is 85% of the total eligible cost, whereby each beneficiary will be reimbursed 85% of the validated paid expenditure.

4.1. Budget ceilings per project

The total budget requested for the projects must be between the following amounts:

Policy Objective	Priority		Minimum TOTAL COST applied for (€)	Maximum TOTAL COST requested (€)
OP1	1	MAC Smart	500.000	5.000.000
OP2	2	MAC Green	500.000	5.000.000
IEO 2	4	MAC Mobility	250.000	2.000.000

4.2. Advance payments

An advance of 5% of the allocated ERDF may be granted to beneficiaries of approved projects on request, except for private companies.

5. PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

All projects co-financed by the Programme must demonstrate a strong partnership component, both in their conception and in their development, with a clear focus on results.

Projects must comply with the general guidelines of the Programme and the following requirements:

- Meet the eligibility requirements,
- At least one beneficiary from one of the three European regions of the programme (Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands) and one participant from the seven African partner countries of the programme (Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe and Senegal).
- Fall exclusively within one of the investment priorities of the Programme and respond to one of the specific objectives of the Programme.
- Have a clear focus on results and capitalisation of results.
- Contribute to the Programme's objectives and indicators.
- Be compatible with national and European policies, in particular on sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination and gender equality.
- Contribute to the development of the cooperation area in accordance with their respective strategies and plans.

- Respect the provisions of the Eligibility Rules approved by the Monitoring Committee with regard to expenditure included in the project budget.

6. TYPES OF PARTNERS

For each specific objective, the Programme establishes a non-exhaustive list of potential project partners:

- + Public administrations and public and private law entities linked to them.
- + Universities, research centres, technological institutes and foundations.
- + Chambers of Commerce, business and professional associations and other socio-economic bodies.
- + Private enterprises (only in Specific Objective 1.1).
- + Other public or private non-profit organisations.

All projects will involve the following partners:

1. ERDF beneficiary partners: entities located in the territory of the European regions of Madeira, the Azores and the Canary Islands, which apply for ERDF support.
2. African Third Country Partners: these are the entities of the territories of Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe and Senegal, which are part of the cooperation area and are not eligible for ERDF assistance.

Projects may also involve associated participants: these are entities from inside or outside the Programme cooperation area whose participation is justifiably beneficial to the achievement of the project's objectives and **which do not ask for ERDF support**.

ERDF beneficiary partners must have a **headquarters, office or permanent establishment** in one of the three European regions of the Programme.

The partners must have the technical and economic competencies and capacities to carry out the proposed actions.

All projects will be led by a **Lead Partner**, who will be financially and legally responsible for the project as a whole, ensuring its correct management before the Managing Authority and the rest of the Programme's management and control structures.

The lead partner must be an entity located in one of the three Programme regions belonging to the European Union (Madeira, Azores and Canary Islands) and must comply with its responsibilities as set out in art.26 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 (Interreg Regulation).

Private companies, partners from African third countries and associated entities are not eligible to be a Lead Partner.

Each of the partners in the partnership will be responsible for the implementation of the actions described in the project.

The participation of private companies in projects is subject to the following limitations:

- + Only ERDF beneficiaries are eligible under E.O.1.1.
- + Their participation must add value to the project, favouring the transfer to the market of the results achieved and must be adequately justified in the project.
- + They may not be the lead partner in the project.
- + They may not receive an advance payment.
- + They may not receive more than one hundred thousand euros (€100,000) of ERDF aid, so the maximum budget per company and project will be one hundred and seventeen thousand six hundred and forty-seven euros (€117,647), plus the partner's own counterpart.

In addition, in order to be eligible for ERDF assistance, private companies applying for assistance under SO 1.1 must meet the following requirements:

- Be up to date with tax and Social Security obligations, having regularised their tax and contribution situation with the Public Treasury, the Social Security and the entities paying the incentives.
- Not have any convictions or sanctions that establish the loss of eligibility for subsidies or other public aid.
- Not being considered as a company in crisis in accordance with Article 2(18) of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 and not be in an arrangement with creditors.
- Be at least 3 years old;
- Prove, by means of a declaration of responsibility or by submitting the annual accounts to the Commercial Register or other official register, that the average value of the turnover of the last 3 years available is at least one and a half times higher than the average annual value of its budget in the application form.

7. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications must be submitted electronically through the Programme's management tool, **e-MAC**, by accessing the Programme's website: www.interregmac.org.

The application shall be registered by the **Lead Partner** and shall be completed in only one of the languages foreseen (Spanish or Portuguese).

The deadline for the submission of project applications will be published on the following website: www.interregmac.org

8. EVALUATION AND SELECTION

All projects submitted will participate in the selection process in free competitive competition.

1st phase: Admissibility check.

All project applications submitted will be subject to an initial admissibility check to verify compliance with the formal requirements for project evaluation, in accordance with the **conditions of admissibility** approved by the Monitoring Committee in the document "*Methodology for the evaluation and selection of projects*".

If it is verified that the project does not comply with the eligibility requirements, it will not be possible to rectify the situation and will therefore be excluded from the evaluation process.

2nd phase: Evaluation.

The evaluation of project applications will be carried out jointly by the Joint Secretariat (JS), the Regional Governments of the Canary Islands, Azores and Madeira and the national representatives of the African partner countries of the Programme in accordance with the **evaluation criteria** approved by the Monitoring Committee, as set out in the document "*Methodology for the evaluation and selection of projects*", published on the Programme's website.

3rd phase: Selection.

Following the evaluation, the Steering Committee shall take the following documents into account for its decision-making:

- Terms of the call.
- Application forms of the accepted projects.
- Evaluation sheets for these projects.
- List of the projects ordered according to the assessment obtained, including at least the following elements: priority, specific objective, code, acronym, title, participating entities, region/country, requested fund (ERDF/ NDICI if applicable) and total cost.
- List with the average execution rate achieved by the beneficiaries in the projects in which they participated in the Interreg MAC 2014-2020 Programme.

The Management Committee may adopt, by consensus, the following types of duly motivated decisions:

- Approval of projects according to the application submitted.
- Approval of projects conditional on one of the following decisions:
 - Adaptation of the total budget of the project and/or of the aid requested.
 - Merger of several projects with similar partners and/or themes.

- Changes to the partnership.
 - Modulation of the aid to be granted to beneficiaries according to the average degree of implementation achieved in Interreg MAC projects in the 2014-2020 period.
- Rejection of projects.
 - Approval of a reserve list of projects to be activated depending on financial availability.

At the end of the selection process, the Programme Managing Authority will notify electronically via email the decision of the Steering Committee to the Lead Partners of all submitted project applications.

9. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All information concerning the Programme and all the necessary documentation for the submission of project applications is available on the Programme's website (www.interregmac.org).

Information on the identification and contact details of the Joint Secretariat and the regional and national Programme Authorities is also available on the websites.

The Joint Secretariat and the regional authorities of the Canary Islands, Azores and Madeira will provide support for the resolution of questions related to the submission of applications during the call opening period.

Technical questions related to the e-MAC IT system should be addressed to the Joint Secretariat preferably by e-mail to the following address: info@interregmac.org.