

ENVIRONMENT – IMPROVE FRESHWATER QUALITY IN CROSS-BORDER RIVER BASINS.

1. Summary of call

The INTERREG VA Programme is making a call for applications under the specific objective: Improve Freshwater Quality in Cross-Border River Basins, objective 2.4.

To improve freshwater quality in cross-border river basins.

The total value of call is €20 million ERDF

Opening Date: 07 October 2015

Closing Date: **08 January 2016 (15:00)**

Steering Committee: 04 March 2016

The result indicator:

Percentage of cross-border freshwater bodies in cross-border river basins with good or high quality. The current baseline is 32% with the target for 2023 of 65%.

The output indicators:

- **3 river water quality improvement projects completed**
- **50 cross-border groundwater monitoring wells installed**
- **1 cross-border drinking water Sustainable Catchment Area Management Plan**

Applicants will need to demonstrate their ability to achieve against the outputs indicated and project selection will prioritise those projects which have the maximum potential to deliver the result indicator provided above.

2. Essential information

This call for applications should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Cooperation Programme and associated Citizens' Summary;
- The Programme Rules;
- Guide for Applicants.

Please consult these documents before completing the application form as they contain essential information to assist you in making the best application possible.

Applicants may also find it useful to consult the 'Impact Assessment Toolkit for Cross-Border Cooperation'. This toolkit has been developed by the Centre for Cross-Border Studies, as part of an INTERREG IVA funded project and is intended to be a practical guide to assist with planning cross-border projects. A copy of the toolkit can be downloaded from our website.

3. Project Selection Criteria

The following selection criteria will be used:

- a. Contribution of the project to the defined results and outputs of the programme;
- b. Quality of the project design and in particular;
 - i. All projects activities must align with the EU Water Framework Directive (this also includes integrated river basin management plans);
- c. Quality of project team and implementation arrangements;
- d. Value for money;
- e. Quality of cross-border co-operation with demonstrable added value;
- f. Contribution towards sustainable development; and
- g. Contribution towards equality.

4. Background to INTERREG Programme

The INTERREG VA 2014-2020 Programme is one of approximately 60 programmes across the European Union designed to promote greater levels of cross-border co-operation. Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland share a number of common features with other border areas across Europe where developmental problems are exacerbated by the existence of

borders. Borders can distort infrastructure and communication networks resulting in reduced economic development and different policy approaches which hinder joined-up service delivery.

The INTERREG VA Programme has been designed to address many of these issues in order to promote greater economic, social and territorial cohesion across the region.

5. Eligible Region

The eligible area for the INTERREG VA Programme is:

- Northern Ireland;
- The Border Counties of Ireland (Monaghan, Leitrim, Cavan, Louth, Sligo and Donegal); and
- Western Scotland (Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire and North Ayrshire mainland; South Ayrshire; Lochaber, Skye & Lochalsh, Arran & Cumbrae and Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar/Western Isles).

Projects must comply with the cross-border requirements of Article 12 of 1299/2013 as detailed in the Programme Rules.

6. What is the theme “Improve Freshwater Quality in Cross-Border River Basins” going to achieve?

In order to improve water quality across the region it is necessary to promote the shared management of shared water resources and to invest in cross-border solutions to achieve the targets within the EU Water Framework Directives. The investment by the programme will lead to an improvement in the baseline condition of water quality, physical structure and habitat in a number of cross-border catchment areas. This will contribute towards the achievement of targets relating to good water quality and ecological status of all water bodies (rivers, lakes, groundwater, transitional).

The investment will provide for an increase in the level of cross-border integrated management of river catchment areas and the development of shared solutions to meet EU targets with regard to water quality. There are also opportunities to share best practice approaches across the region. This will in turn lead to an increased number of water bodies with higher classification of moderate, good or high quality and a decreased number of water bodies classified as poor or bad quality, in line with the designations contained within EU Water Directives.

Investment in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental *acquis* and to address needs, identified by the Member States for investment that goes beyond those requirements.

The interventions will focus on the following cross-border water bodies:

- The river catchment activities will be limited to river catchments where the area is on both sides of the Northern Ireland / Ireland border.
- The location of the groundwater wells will be on both sides of the Northern Ireland / Ireland border to support monitoring and pollution of the river catchment activities.
- The sustainable catchment area management modelling and plan will be a cross-border plan focusing on a freshwater capture area, encompassing activities in areas exclusive to some of the border counties of Ireland and the adjacent border counties of Northern Ireland.
- . Knowledge transfer and exchange of best practice within the three jurisdictions.

7. Anticipated Actions

It is anticipated that the programme will fund the following types of actions:

- The development and implementation of integrated river basin management plans and actions;
- The development and implementation of management plans and projects for designated drinking water protected areas so that Water Framework Directive(WFD) water, including any designated drinking water protected areas, classification can be maintained and improved;
- Activities related to the improvement of river water quality;
- Activities related to fresh water quality management research;
- Activities related to ground water monitoring wells;

8. Budget and co-financing rate

€20m million ERDF is available under this call. Successful projects will be offered a grant in Euro.

The maximum intervention rate that can be applied is 85%. This means that applicants are required to bring a minimum of up to 15% match funding to the eligible project costs over the lifetime of the

project. Applicants may request 15% match funding from the Member States through the application process. Please refer to the Programme Rules for further details on match funding.

However, please be aware the intervention rate (grant rate) may decrease depending upon the State Aid implications of your project. It is the responsibility of the Lead Partner to ensure that State Aid cover and compliance is in place. The application should clearly outline the process to ensure and demonstrate State Aid compliance.

The level of grant aid may also be adjusted to take due account of anticipated future revenue streams. Please consult the Programme Rules for further details.

Grants and payments may take any of the following forms:

- Reimbursement of eligible costs actually incurred and paid;
- Standard scales of unit costs;
- Flat rate financing, available for overhead costs or salary costs.

The above options may be combined only where each option covers different categories of cost or where they are used for different projects forming a part of an operation or for successive phases of an operation. Flat rate financing for overheads is available for this call at a rate of 15% of staff costs.

9. Application process

A two stage process will be in place for this call as detailed in the Guide for Applicants. Full details of the assessment process, including admissibility criteria are available in the Guide for Applicants.

You can apply online through the SEUPB website. (Note: the online process will not be fully operational until the end of December 2015. In the interim an application form is available from SEUPB).

Completed applications should be submitted to applications@seupb.eu or SEUPB, M-TEK II Building, Armagh Road, Monaghan H18 YH59.

10. Contact Us



For general enquiries about this call please contact the SEUPB on: Tel: +353 47 77003.

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Special EU Programmes Body

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Please note that data on priority sites within Northern Ireland will be provided by NIEA by the end of October 2015.