

Danube Transnational Programme

Call announcement for the 1st call for proposal

23rd September 2015

1. Introduction

The Danube Transnational Programme is launching the **first call for proposals¹ for its priorities 1, 2, 3 and 4.1**. The Programme offers financial support to transnational projects contributing to the development of a more innovative, better accessible and sustainable Danube Region. The programme has been designed under the territorial cooperation goal of the European Union. In practice, the programme combines financing from the EU structural funds - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the EU external funds – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) and European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). However the ENI funds are not available for the 1st call.

The first call of the Danube Transnational Programme is organised according to a two-step procedure.

- In the “*First step*”, applicants are requested to submit electronically, **through the programme website (<http://www.interreg-danube.eu>)** an Expression of Interest (EoI), outlining mainly the intervention logic of the proposal and the strategic relevance for the DTP. No additional supporting documents are to be delivered at this stage.
- In the “*Second step*”, the pre-selected project proposals will be invited to submit an Application Package including a fully developed Application Form (AF), which will contain more in-depth information about the content and it will be the basis for the selection of the project proposals.

The application and selection procedure is detailed in PART 5 of the Applicants Manual.

2. Objectives and priorities

Danube Transnational Programme supports the policy **integration in the Danube area** through projects addressing key challenges and opportunities of the region. The strategic vision is “policy integration” in specific fields of action below the EU-level (not duplicating efforts in policy integration at the EU-level e.g. TEN-T) and above the national level. Transnational projects should influence national, regional and local policies (being policy driver).

¹ *This document was endorsed by the Danube Programming Committee on 1st September 2015. However, please note that it is still subject to final approval by the Monitoring Committee to be established within three months of the date of notification of the European Commission decision adopting the Cooperation Programme.*

In order to achieve a higher degree of territorial integration of the very heterogeneous Danube region, the transnational cooperation programme will act as a **policy driver** aiming to tackle the common challenges and needs deriving from specific policy fields. Therefore, transnational cooperation is expected to deliver tangible results through the **development and practical implementation of policy frameworks, tools and services**. To this end, the programme looks to promote concrete pilot investments.

The programme is divided into **4 thematic priority axes** addressing transnational key challenges of the region:²

1. Innovative and socially responsible Danube region

In order to contribute to the implementation of the flagship initiative “Innovation Union of the Europe 2020 Strategy” in the Danube Region countries the programme pays specific attention to a number of innovation topics of broad relevance in the cooperation area such as eco-innovation, knowledge transfer, cluster policy, social innovation and skilled entrepreneurship including technological and non-technological innovation aspects. The social dimension in innovation (social innovation, educational aspects, and entrepreneurship skills) is given high importance. When developing their project proposals the applicants should clearly address one of the two specific objectives defined in the Cooperation Programme: Improve framework conditions for innovation or Improve competences for business and social innovation.

2. Environment and culture responsible Danube region

The programme strengthens joint and integrated approaches to preserve and manage the diversity of natural and cultural assets in the Danube region as a basis for sustainable development and growth strategies. Moreover the programme envisages investing in the creation and/or maintenance of ecological corridors of transnational relevance in the Danube region. This intervention is directly interlinked with water management and the control of environmental risk factors such flood risks. Furthermore, environmental risk prevention and management is addressed in relation to risks that are caused by non-functioning ecosystems and man-made changes. When developing their project proposals the applicants should clearly address one of the four specific objectives defined in the Cooperation programme: Strengthen transnational water management and flood risk prevention or Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources or Foster the restoration and management of ecological corridors or Improve preparedness for environmental risk management.

² More information available starting with page 36 of the Cooperation Programme.

3. Better connected and energy responsible Danube region

The Cooperation Programme will tackle common challenges related to environmentally-friendly (including low-noise), low-carbon and safe transport systems including inland waterways & ports and multimodal links in order to contribute to sustainable regional and local mobility, modal integration and intelligent transport. The programme intends also to support the regional connectivity and the balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas. Better management of regional mobility and better permeability of borders at the regional level should ensure that urban and rural areas benefit from the opportunities created by the major transportation networks which are developed at the European level. The Cooperation Programme tackles also energy as typical issue in which a transnational approach is essential in order to ensure the security of supply of the countries, market integration and more effective regional planning, as well as to jointly identify the most critical infrastructure developments. Regional energy planning and coordination should be improved across the Danube region within the wider context of EU energy policy-making to safeguard the security and efficiency of energy supplies. Another aspect is the development of smart distribution systems where the programme area is still in the early stages. The programme aims to contribute within its specific scope to the development of smart energy distribution systems to make the significant investments of regions in renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and smart grids more efficient. When developing their project proposals the applicants should clearly address one of the two specific objectives defined in the Cooperation Programme: Support environmentally-friendly and safe transport systems and balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas or Improve energy security and energy efficiency.

4. Well governed Danube region, Specific Objective 4.1 Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges

Institutional cooperation and capacity is a key target and the vital element of the programme at the same time. Institutional capacity is not just a technical matter of training civil servants, but it relates to how public authorities interact with and deliver services to businesses and citizens. "Good governance" is the basis and ultimate objective for institutional capacity building. Good governance builds trust and social capital. States with a high level of social capital tend to perform better economically.

The need has been identified by the analysis to develop the capacities of the public authorities and other public and civil society stakeholders to become able to tackle more effectively the challenges of highest relevance for the region. Establishing institutional cooperation by the programme should lead to improving legal and policy frameworks, developing strategies and action plans, development of joint capacities and coordinated delivery of services in areas with major societal challenges such as labour market policies, education systems and policies, demographic change and migration challenges, inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups, participatory

planning process and involvement of civil society, urban-rural cooperation and partnership, cooperation on safety, justice and security issues.

3. Funds allocated for the call and co-financing

The programme will allocate up to **76 MEUR of ERDF** and **7.5 MEUR of IPA** to the first call for proposals. The maximum EU contribution to the projects is 85% (both for ERDF and IPA project partners).

In case applicants coming from EU countries intent to implement activities being considered as state aid relevant, the maximum grant will be calculated applying the *de minimis* rule while respecting the co-financing percentage above.

4. Timeframe

The call will be opened as 2-step procedure starting with 23.09.2015.

The Application Form for Step 1 (Expression of Interest) has to be submitted to the Joint Secretariat latest by 15:00 Central European Time on 03.11.2015 by uploading it on the website of the programme (<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/>). An earlier submission is recommended.

The elaborated Application Form for Step 2 (AF) has to be submitted by the pre-selected projects to the Joint Secretariat between the beginning of April 2015 and mid May 2016.

5. Duration of projects

The duration of projects must not exceed **30 months**. This limit applies for the operative phase of the project and does not comprise the preparation phase.

6. LP principle

Each project has to appoint a Lead Partner who is responsible for the preparation and submission of the application form. In case of approval of the project, the lead partner takes over the full responsibility for management, communication, implementation, and coordination of activities among the involved partners. The lead partner bears legal responsibility for the whole partnership. The lead partner is also the link between the project and the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat (MA/JS) of the Programme.

7. Eligible applicants

- Local, regional, national public bodies/ bodies governed by public law (including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) (more information is available in PART 2 of the Applicants Manual)
- International organisations (more information is available in PART 2 of the Applicants Manual)

- Private bodies (including private enterprises registered in a EU Member State of the programme area) (more information is available in PART 2 of the Applicants Manual)

8. Partnership requirements

The Programme covers 14 countries, 9 of them EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany: Baden Württemberg and Bavaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and 5 non-member states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and parts of Ukraine). As a general rule, EU financing is only provided to project partners located in the Programme Area.

Each project has to involve at least **three financing partners from three different countries** of the programme area: the Lead Partner and at least two project partners. Out of these financing partners, at least one, the Lead Partner, has to be located on the territory of an EU Member state of the Programme area. Due to the size of the programme area and the cooperation character of the programme a higher number of partners is recommended ³

Applicants located outside the programme area but within the EU are not eligible to apply for funding as project partners in the 1st call.

9. Eligible Lead Partners

The following institutions can be lead partners:

- Local, regional, national public bodies/ bodies governed by public law (including EGTCs in the meaning of Article 2(16) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)
- International organisations
- Private **non-profit** bodies

Lead Partners have to be located in an EU Member State of the Programme Area.

10. Programme Language

The official language of the programme is English. Therefore, all communication between applicants and the MA/JS is carried out in English. Information in the EoI, application forms as well as official correspondence must be treated accordingly.

11. Relevant documents

The official programme documents for the 1st Call for Proposals:

- Danube Cooperation Programme
- Applicants Manual

³ Based on experience of the previous programming period, the average number of partners in a project was 15 (including ASPs) and depending on the activities and size of the partnership, the projects budget varied from 1.2 M Euro to 5 M Euro.

- Expression of Interest
- Guidelines for the Expression of Interest

The programme provides tools (project idea and partner search tool) and organises events (lead applicant seminars) to facilitate the generation of project and to support applicants in the project development process. For general advice on the Programme matters, please contact: danube@interreg-danube.eu.

The Application Package and all relevant information about the programme are available under following programme website: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/>

In case of questions do not hesitate to contact your National Contact Point (located in each Danube Participating Country) as well as the colleagues of the Joint Secretariat. The relevant contact information is also available on the above mentioned programme website.