

C4T

Community  
of Practice



# C4T GROUNDWORK Guidelines



# C4T GROUNDWORK – Guidelines

This document provides information and guidelines to facilitate the submission of applications for C4T GROUNDWORK. C4T GROUNDWORK is delivered under the Cohesion for Transition (C4T) Community of practice.

The C4T Community of Practice and the C4T GROUNDWORK are delivered by the C4T Secretariat under the overall coordination of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO). The C4T Secretariat is led by COWI A/S supported by Ecorys, Prognos and Gopa.Com.

## BACKGROUND

Delivering the climate neutral and circular economy ambition of the European Green Deal (EGD) and related EU policies has become an urgent task to accomplish. This urgency is underscored by the new key policy initiatives defined for the upcoming year in the [2024 European Commission Work Programme](#) as part of the EGD: the European wind power package<sup>1</sup>, the 2040 climate target<sup>2</sup>, and the initiative for water resilience<sup>3</sup>.

EU Member States, regions and local authorities are faced by significant risks posed by climate change and often lack sufficient resources to address them. EU funds, and in particular the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) can provide the necessary strands for support on climate change mitigation and adaptation under Policy Objective 2 (PO2) of the 2021-2027 period, titled “*A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe*”. The concept of sustainability transitions<sup>4</sup> is fundamental in this process, understood as the needed systemic changes to phase-out unsustainable practices such as pollution of ecosystems or emitting greenhouse gases while mobilising sustainable ones, i.e. circular economy and resource efficiency practices or sustainable water management, among others. The Cohesion for Transitions (C4T) project has been conceived precisely to help Member States, regions and local authorities in the implementation of such changes.

## WHAT IS C4T COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE?

**C4T Community of Practice** is a community-based platform designed to support EU regions in the use of cohesion policy funds for the implementation of sustainability transitions. It will do so by providing tailor-made technical assistance for the implementation of PO2 investments, as well as by developing a forum for exchange of good practices, and experience-sharing among institutions and stakeholders. Ultimately, C4T is aimed at creating collaborations and

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<sup>1</sup> The European Wind Power Action Plan goals and immediate actions are explained in this [link](#).

<sup>2</sup> The details of this initiative and public consultation process can be found in this [link](#).

<sup>3</sup> More details on this initiative can be found in this [link](#).

<sup>4</sup> The concept of sustainability transitions is explained in the detail in the European Commission’s toolkit – available in all EU27 languages in this [link](#).

partnerships that transcend sectors and disciplines to implement sustainability transitions with cohesion policy.

## WHAT IS C4T GROUNDWORK?

**C4T GROUNDWORK** is a technical assistance instrument that will provide tailor-made advice to EU Member States, regions, local and Managing Authorities in addressing specific issues for the implementation of cohesion policy investments supporting the European Green Deal. This will be provided through a pool of experts that will work together with the beneficiaries in addressing their specific concerns on the implementation of investments under PO2 in the 2021-2027 period of cohesion policy programmes.

### What is the target group of C4T GROUNDWORK?

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The target group for the support are in particular managing and implementing authorities of ERDF and CF programmes that are responsible for implementing investments related to PO2 “A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe” under the ERDF and/or CF programmes.<sup>5</sup> Other public authorities involved in the implementation of investments (e.g. environment and energy authorities, local and regional governments) may also receive support as long as their proposed investments contribute to the implementation of PO2.

### Which thematic areas are covered by C4T GROUNDWORK?

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The support will cover **all** thematic areas under PO2<sup>6</sup> “A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe” under the ERDF and/or CF programmes.

However, the call will particularly focus on:

- Sustainable water and wastewater management
- Circular economy and resource efficiency
- Biodiversity protection

The **other thematic areas under PO2** (adaptation to climate change and disaster resilience, energy efficiency and renewable energy, and smart grids and storage) **can also be covered in this call** and will be considered reflecting effective needs.

### What types of services are covered by C4T GROUNDWORK?

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The technical assistance of C4T Groundwork can be provided to EU regions, Member States and other public authorities involved in the implementation of investments (e.g. environment and energy authorities, local and regional governments), as long as their proposed investments contribute to the implementation of PO2. The services provided may focus on

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<sup>5</sup> More information on the EU Cohesion Policy in the 2021-2027 period can be found in this [link](#).

<sup>6</sup> The scope of this call includes all specific objectives (SOs) under PO2 (SO 2.1-2.7) with the exception of SO 2.8 on sustainable mobility.

transition governance (strategies, programming and planning) or project identification and development, with the aim of speeding up investments towards the implementation of PO2. The list below presents a non-exhaustive list of possible areas of type of technical support that can be provided.

Transition governance (strategies, programming and planning):

- Support to the identification of needs and regional potential / opportunities related to innovation in green transition, decarbonisation and reducing vulnerabilities to climate change impacts.
- Support to the identification and analysis of successful transition strategies and good practices that can provide inspiration to the beneficiary.
- Support to set-up and development regional energy agency/one -stop-shops
- Support to option analysis
- Support to the development and update of strategies, roadmaps and action plans.
- Support to capacity building of public authorities or beneficiaries.
- Support to the development of financing programmes and financial instruments able to leverage private investments,
- Support to implementation of EU clean energy, climate and environmental frameworks to ensure alignment between strategies, plans, programmes, and the European Green Deal, Fit for 55, the Repower EU plan and other EU policies.
- Support to ensuring that programmes are integrating environmental considerations and the do-no-significant-harm principle while contributing to the clean energy and climate objectives.
- Support to integrating climate, disaster and environmental proofing in programming and calls for projects, respecting environmental hierarchies and mitigating possible negative impacts of investments.
- Support in generating common visions and consensus around sustainability transition for the main impacted groups.
- Support in establishing cross-region and cross-border cooperations on sustainability transition.

Project identification and development:

- Support related to the development of new project ideas (e.g., innovative solutions to delivering nature-based solutions).
- Support for the identification and development of bankable projects in the areas under PO2.
- Support to capacity building related to project preparation and implementation.
- Support to the securing of funding of projects.
- Support in the identification of other sources of funding and financing for sustainability transition projects to complement EU funding.

The technical assistance will be only provided to the selected applicants that have applied as indicated in the specific Call for Applications.

## What is the scope or level of support provided by C4T?

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The scope of the support will be defined in close dialogue with the beneficiary and the European Commission and agreed upon in the inception of each assignment for support. The expected level of resources allocated to individual expert assignments is expected to be in the range of 10-15 expert-days over the period of 3-4 months. This range may differ depending on the scope of the technical assistance needed and the overall demand for the support.

No direct funding is provided to the beneficiaries as part of technical support.

## How will C4T GROUNDWORK be delivered?

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The technical assistance of C4T Groundwork will start immediately upon selection and will be delivered in close dialogue with the beneficiary and DG REGIO to ensure that the most appropriate approach is chosen and tailored to the needs. The delivery modes can consist of study and field visits, workshops, trainings, job-shadowing webinars, co-thinking labs and hands-on-expert support. Such support will be tailored to the local needs in terms of understanding of the context.

## THIRD CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The third Call for Applications covers a range of thematic areas under PO2. The overall objective is to help authorities at regional and local levels to ensure speedier and more qualitative implementation of their cohesion policy resources under PO2.

A particular focus is given under this call to the following areas:

**Sustainable water and wastewater management:** Support to regional and/or local agencies/bodies (or similar type of organisations) to help in the deployment of water and sustainable water management measures. A particular focus will be given to measures related to drinking water extraction, treatment, storage and/or distribution, to water management and water resource conservation (e.g, River Basin Management), and to wastewater collection and treatment.

**Circular economy and resource efficiency:** Support in the use of EU funds and the identification and development of projects that accelerate the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy to regional and/or local agencies/bodies (or similar type of organisations). A particular focus will be given to measures related waste management, municipal waste collection and treatment, commercial and hazardous waste and management, and reuse and recycling.

**Biodiversity protection:** Support to regional and/or local agencies/bodies (or similar type of organisations) includes the use of EU funds and the identification and development of projects that help to reduce all forms of pollution (e.g., environmental or noise pollution), and to

protect and preserve nature, biodiversity. A particular focus will be given to measures related to Natura 2000 sites covered by protection and restoration measures.

And the following areas under PO2 will also be considered depending on effective needs in:

**Adaptation to climate change and disaster resilience:** support for climate adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience, focusing on ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions in order to speeding up investment in climate adaptation, prevention/preparedness to climate risks, and disaster response (e.g., floods and landslides, storms, droughts, fires, earthquakes).

**Energy efficiency and renewable energy:** acceleration of the energy transition, supporting energy efficiency measures in enterprises and production processes, and construction and renovation of energy efficient buildings (residential and public). Deployment of renewable energy production and distribution (wind, solar, biomass, marine, geothermal, among others), and renewable energy communities.

**Smart energy grids and storage:** Regional and/or local agencies/bodies (or similar type of organisations) will be supported in the use of EU funds and the development and identification of projects that help to accelerate the development of smart energy systems/infrastructure, smart grids and energy storage.

## ELIGIBILITY

The technical assistance of C4T Groundwork can be provided to EU Member States and/or regions, who are committed to engage in sustainability transitions and are investing in the areas covered under PO2 “*A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe*” under the ERDF and/or CF programmes.<sup>7</sup> The target group for the support are in particular managing and implementing authorities of ERDF and CF funds that are responsible for implementing investments related to PO2 “*A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe*” under the ERDF and/or CF programmes.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

The only valid way to apply is via this [EU-Survey questionnaire](#). Please complete the application form in English. The deadline for submission of applications under the third Call for Applicants: **8th March 2024 at 23:59 CET**.

## SELECTION PROCESS

The evaluation of applications will be performed by C4T Secretariat under the steering of DG REGIO. The final selection of applications and the determination of the allocation of resources to each application will be made by DG REGIO. A two-step evaluation and selection process

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<sup>7</sup> The technical support in relation to Just Transition Plans should be requested under the Just Transition Platform, [link](#).

will be applied. The first step will consist of assessment of admissibility. Once admissibility is assessed, the prioritisation of the applications will be performed according to specific criteria.

Please kindly note that priority will be given to applicants who are able to allocate the necessary time to receive the technical assistance.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any other questions, do not hesitate to contact us directly via [secretariat@cohesion4transitions.eu](mailto:secretariat@cohesion4transitions.eu).