

Technical Assistance to the Hungarian Ministry of Energy



Map of Hungary.

Source: Wikipedia

The **Hungarian Ministry of Energy** was selected for a C4T GROUNDWORK TA assignment as part of the third call for applications. The assignment started in July 2024 and was completed in October 2024.

C4T GROUNDWORK was launched by the European Commission, DG REGIO, to support the implementation of sustainability transitions investments funded by ERDF and CF, under Policy Objective 2 (PO2) “A greener, low carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy”.

C4T GROUNDWORK provides eligible regions with tailor-made capacity building and advisory support covering areas such as the energy transition, circular economy, water management, climate adaptation or biodiversity.

The Hungarian Ministry of Energy is responsible for preparing calls under Specific Objective RS02.6 (Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy (CE)). The Specific Objective is part of EEEOP Plus (Environment and Energy Efficiency Operational Programme Plus) under the 2021-2027 programming period financed by ERDF and CF. Under the EEEOP Plus Programme, the focal area *Development of a circular economy* is complex and horizontal, with a modest amount of available resources.

The focal area will target services and new business models, encourage the independence of raw material consumption and GDP growth, and create value chains/circles of value. The calls shall also focus on decoupling, promoting and implementing green technology, and improving competitiveness. However, such RS02.6 projects have to date never been financed by the EEEOP Plus.

Given the wide range of eligible activities, the limited available resources, and the ambitious goal of facilitating and promoting the transition as widely as possible, defining the optimal range of call requirements is challenging. Consequently, the Hungarian Ministry needed support in preparing the specific details of the call requirements.

The C4T Groundwork technical assistance conducted, in response to the needs specified by the ministry, an analysis of calls for ERDF/CF/LIFE+/Horizon Europe/national-funded circular economy programmes with a focus on the characteristics and opportunities relevant to the Hungarian economy and the scope of the EEEOP Plus focal area *Development of a circular economy*. The C4T Groundwork also analysed funds co-financed by the ERDF using financial instruments to support SMEs. The research has sought to allow the Ministry of Energy to:

- Obtain a broad overview of the geographic and thematic spread of circular economy calls in the EU Member States.
- Investigate selected calls in more detail via structurally organised information on objectives, targeted beneficiaries, funded activities, selection criteria, evaluation approach, et cetera.

Step 1 – Identification and screening of relevant existing OPs based on allocated funding and past projects

In the first step, eight countries were selected to analyse OPs. Three of them were chosen based on their similarities to Hungary (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania). Three further countries were selected as known frontrunners on circular economy (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands). Two supplementary countries were added for a varied selection (Poland, Germany). From these countries, relevant OPs were identified using data from the Cohesion Open Data Platform

for the current programming period (2021-2027) and the Kohesio project data platform for the past programming period (2014-2020).

For the current programming period, the Cohesion Open Data Platform data was filtered by Fields of Intervention (FoI) relevant to circular economy as well as the amount of funding allocated to each FoI within the different OPs. For the past programming period, a keyword search string was applied to the project descriptions of the Kohesio project data, providing information on which OPs supported the most projects related to circular economy. In coordination with the ministry, the 20 most relevant OPs were selected via this procedure.

The national authorities managing these OPs were first identified and then screened to obtain information on calls for proposals. The calls were subsequently screened for circular economy relevance. The resulting list of 24 calls was analysed according to their relevance to the EEEOP Plus Programme, and six calls were selected with the ministry for a deep dive.

Step 2 – Deep dive on selected calls to extract relevant call requirement information

The call information of the six selected calls was scrutinized to provide a structured overview of objectives, funded activities, targeted beneficiaries, selection criteria, form of finance, and time horizon, among others.

Country	Programming Period	Call name
FI	2021-2027	National call for applications for the Green Transition under the theme A carbon-neutral society with a circular economy (YM/ ERDF).
FI	2021-2027	Cross-regional ERDF application for regional councils of Eastern and Northern Finland: Clean solutions.
DK	2021-2027	Circular value chains for SMEs
CZ	2014-2020	LOW-CARBON TECHNOLOGIES – Secondary raw materials – Call V
CZ	2021-2027	Circular economy – Challenge I
DE	2021-2027	Ressource.NRW

Analysing the calls in more detail, several conclusions could be drawn. While they all aim to promote circular economy practices, resource efficiency, and reduce environmental impacts, the funded activities and targeted beneficiaries vary greatly depending on the call objectives. The Finnish and Danish calls have a broad thematic focus, encouraging collaboration across multiple sectors and value chains, with emphasis on broad economic and environmental goals. By contrast, the Czech and German calls are more narrowly focused on technological advancements, particularly in waste recycling, the usage of secondary raw materials, and low-carbon technologies. The selection of beneficiaries mirrors this focus, with the Finnish and Danish calls encouraging broad collaboration across stakeholder groups, while the Czech and German have a specific focus on companies.

Step 3: Complementing with LIFE calls

A screening of the EU LIFE Programme of the current programming period was conducted by applying a keyword search filter to the calls listed on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal. In this manner, 11 circular economy calls were identified, and the respective call documents were screened for thematic relevance. Two calls were marked as particularly relevant for EEEOP Plus.

Step 4: Complementing with Horizon calls

To identify relevant Horizon calls, a keyword search filter was applied to data from circa 9000 projects funded under Horizon master calls. This enabled the identification of the master calls with the highest number of funded projects related to circular economy. Out of these, Hungary selected four sub calls for a deep dive. The information on these calls was screened in detail and structured in the same manner as was done for the national calls.

Step 5: Complementing with funds co-financed by ERDF applying various financial instruments

Since EEEOP Plus will allocate half of the available resources for circular economy development in the form of financial instruments, information on existing calls using financial instruments was valuable to the beneficiary. Since all six circular economy calls selected for the analysis use grants, an additional step was added to the TA Groundwork to obtain information on how financial instruments are used within ERDF funding. The website fi-compass¹ was screened for this purpose, and two German funds targeting technology-oriented SMEs were identified as relevant and analysed in detail.

The multiple-step approach outlined above has provided the Hungarian Ministry of Energy with an overview of the geographic and thematic spread of circular economy calls in the EU Member States as well as detailed information on selected calls of different programmes. The analysis of selected calls in the final report has further provided the ministry with a detailed comparison of the calls and guiding questions that can facilitate the design of circular economy calls under the EEEOP Plus Programme.

The support we have received from the experts within the framework of C4T Groundwork provided a broad overview of circular economy related subsidies used across the EU, allowing us to prepare even better calls for proposals on this topic.



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¹ <https://www.fi-compass.eu/>