

Connecting Europe Facility

Transport and Digital sectors

Specific provisions and opportunities for EU outermost regions

The EU's outermost regions can benefit from many new opportunities for support under EU policies to help them shape, implement and fund their tailored regional development strategies. The permanent constraints faced by these regions and their specificities are recognised in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which provides for specific measures to support these regions. It is in this spirit that most EU funds and programmes 2021-27 include specific provisions applicable to the outermost regions. In its Communication "Putting People first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth and unlocking the potential of the EU's [outermost regions](#)", the European Commission has committed itself to facilitating outermost regions' uptake of EU tools to improve mobility and connectivity¹. The Connecting Europe facility is a key EU tool for this purpose.

About CEF

Connecting Europe Facility is EU's key funding instrument to promote growth, jobs and competitiveness through targeted infrastructure investment at European level. It supports the development of high performing, sustainable and efficiently interconnected trans-European networks in the fields of transport, energy and digital services. The CEF benefits people across all Member States, as it makes travel easier and more sustainable, it enhances Europe's energy security while enabling wider use of renewables, and it facilitates cross-border interaction between public administrations, businesses and citizens.

The CEF is divided into three **sectors**, including transport and digital.

CEF Transport supports the construction and upgrade of transport infrastructure projects, for the development and modernisation of the Trans-European Transport network. The transport sector has the biggest share of the overall budget, with €25 807 000 000 dedicated to it, and is implemented in direct management by the European Commission with the support of its European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), based on competitive calls for proposals.

CEF Digital supports the deployment of digital networks, i.e. sustainable and high capacity projects such as 5G coverage of trans-European corridors and submarine cables. The programme has a dedicated budget of €2 065 000 000. A part of the programme for the digital sector is implemented by the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA).

In line with the Union objective of mainstreaming climate actions into Union sectoral policies and Union funds, the CEF shall contribute, through its actions, 60 % of its overall financial envelope to climate objectives.

Key Facts

Programme duration: 2021-2027

Total budget: €33 710 000 000

Thematic categories: Transport, Digital, Energy

Target group: various types of organisations (government institutions, private companies, public enterprises, SMEs, regions and cities, research institutes, non-profit organisations, etc).

Type of funding: grants and procurements, financial instruments

¹This factsheet has been elaborated as part of the organisation of seven virtual workshops for EU outermost regions on the following EU competitive programmes: Connecting Europe Facility (CEF); Digital Europe Programme; Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE); Erasmus+; Horizon Europe; Creative Europe Programme; Single Market Programme.

Opportunities for EU Outermost Regions

Outermost regions face particular challenges in terms of physical accessibility due to their remoteness, their dependence on air and maritime connections to access their mainland and other EU countries as well as neighbouring countries, and persistent connectivity issues¹. Still, the transport and digital needs are different for each region, resulting from differences in population size, structure of the economy and geographical location. The CEF provides many opportunities to support and co-finance transport and digital infrastructure in the EU outermost regions. The CEF Regulation also includes specific provisions to match their particular needs.

The CEF Transport multi annual work programme adopted in August 2021 makes specific references to improving outermost regions' connectivity and support to basic maritime port infrastructure in these regions. The CEF Digital multi-annual work programme adopted in December 2021 also specifically refers to supporting strategic connectivity to the outermost regions and the upgrade of backbone networks including submarine cables.

Supported actions

Below are presented some of the actions that can be supported by the CEF Programme which are the most relevant for outermost regions.

CEF Transport can support actions relating to efficient, interconnected, interoperable and multimodal networks for the development of railway, road, inland waterway and maritime infrastructure. This includes, among other, **actions implementing sections of the comprehensive network (mainly)² located in outermost regions**, including actions relating to the relevant urban nodes, maritime ports, rail-road terminals, connections to airports and multimodal logistics platforms³. The Programme also supports actions relating to smart, interoperable, sustainable, multimodal, inclusive, accessible, safe and secure mobility⁴.

CEF Digital aims among others, to increase the capacity and resilience of digital backbone networks in all EU territories, in particular the outermost regions, as outlined in its work programme⁵. CEF Digital can support the following key topics⁶ targeting specific types of deployment projects:

- 1. The deployment of and access to very high-capacity networks**, including 5G systems, capable of providing Gigabit connectivity in areas where socioeconomic drivers are located;
- 2. The provision of very high-quality local wireless connectivity** in local communities that is free of charge and without discriminatory conditions;
- 3. Uninterrupted coverage with 5G systems of all major transport paths**, including the TEN-T;
- 4. Deployment of new or significant upgrade of existing backbone networks**, including submarine cables, within and between Member States and between the Union and third countries;
- 5. The implementation of digital connectivity infrastructures related to cross-border projects** in the areas of transport or energy and/or supporting operational digital platforms directly associated to transport or energy infrastructures.

Award criteria

The award criteria laid down in the calls for proposals must take into account, among other elements, the cross-border dimension, network integration and territorial accessibility, including for European islands and outermost regions⁷. Other elements which must be considered in the award criteria include for instance the economic social and environmental impact of the project, the union added value and the maturity of action.

¹. As highlighted in the Staff Working Document on outermost regions at a glance – assets, challenges and opportunities ([SWD/2022/133](#)) and in the Impact Assessment report accompanying the proposal for a revision of the TEN-T Regulation ([SWD/2021/472](#))

². The comprehensive network should be a Europe-wide transport network ensuring the accessibility and connectivity of all regions in the Union, including the remote, insular and outermost regions according to the TEN-T Regulation. It is worth noting that the Commission's Proposal to revise the TEN-T Regulation ([COM\(2021\) 812 final](#)) includes amendments to increase the outermost regions connectivity and accessibility.

³. Article 9.2.a CEF Regulation

⁴. Article 9.2.b CEF Regulation

⁵. CEF Digital work programme for 2021-2025

⁶. Article 9.4 and 8 CEF Regulation

⁷. Article 14.1.c. CEF Regulation.

Co-financing rates

To match the specific needs of outermost regions, the CEF programme provides for higher co-financing rates for projects located in these regions¹.

General and Cohesion envelopes for the CEF Transport:

Outermost Region in a non-Cohesion Member State: can only apply under the CEF Transports

- General envelope: studies 50% - works 70%

Outermost Region in a Cohesion Member State - both options are open:

- to apply under the CEF-T General envelope: studies 50% - works 70%; or
- to apply under the CEF-T Cohesion envelope (studies and works at 85%)

This does not concern the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility, where the funding is based on unit contributions and fixed co-funding rates.

Complementarities with other programmes

The CEF programme and the [Horizon Europe](#) framework programme for research and innovation are complementary. While CEF focuses on building modern infrastructure (transport and digital networks), EU funded Horizon Europe projects develop and test new clean transport and digital technologies that can be used in the next generation of modern infrastructure.

Complementarities also exists with other relevant EU programmes, in particular the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund and the InvestEU Programme. As mentioned in the CEF Regulation², considering the significant investment needs to be met in order to make progress towards completing the TEN-T core network by 2030, completing the TEN-T comprehensive network by 2050 and decarbonisation-digitalisation-urban investments, it is appropriate to make the most efficient use of the various Union financing programmes and instruments, thereby maximising the added value of investments supported by the Union.

Example of funded projects

The initiative [WiFi4EU](#), funded by the CEF Telecom, was deployed in several outermost regions to install Wi-Fi hotspots in public spaces and increase Internet access in the regions. Concrete examples in Guadeloupe are available [here](#).

CEF Transport co-funded a [project](#) on onshore power supply for Spanish ports in the Canary Islands.

More information

How to apply?

Calls for proposals are published on the [EU Funding and Tenders Portal](#). More information on the calls can be found on the websites of [CINEA](#) and [HaDEA](#).

Currently open calls

2022 CEF Transport Call: [call for proposals page](#) | Deadline: 18 January 2023

CEF Digital Calls: [calls for proposals](#) | Deadline: 28 February 2023

Applicable EU law

[Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1153](#) establishing the Connecting Europe Facility

[Regulation \(EU\) 1315/2013](#) on guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)

Other information

CEF Programme: [information webpage](#)

CEF Digital: [programme webpage](#) | [work-programme for 2021-2025](#)

CEF Transport: [programme webpage](#) | [work-programme for 2021-2027](#)

1. Article 15.6 CEF Regulation.

2. Recital (25) CEF Regulation.