

Ambient and Air Quality Directive. Regional and Local Technical Assistance Programme

Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI)

April 2026

Project Summary

Clean Air Fund (CAF) invites Expressions of Interest from consortia with strong technical, analytical and implementation expertise to deliver a pan-European technical assistance programme supporting regional and local authorities to implement the revised Ambient Air Quality Directive.

The programme will support at least two priority regions (air quality zones or agglomerations*, as per the definition under the Ambient Air Quality Directive) per country in eight EU Member States (France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Romania, Bulgaria), focusing on regions with high pollution levels, compliance risks, health burden and socio-economic vulnerability. The selected consortium will provide targeted technical assistance for clean air policy implementation, modelling support and structured capacity-building to help authorities develop regional Air Quality Plans and Air Quality Roadmaps that demonstrate how new AAQD limit values can be achieved on time, minimising reliance on derogations whilst providing co-benefits to the population's health, climate and economic growth.

Background to Clean Air Fund

Launched in 2019, the Clean Air Fund is a philanthropic initiative with a mission to tackle air pollution around the world. Our aim is to help build and support a powerful global movement for clean air. We achieve this by bringing together funders, researchers, policy-makers and campaigners working on a wide range of issues to find and scale solutions that will provide clean air for all.

More information about the Clean Air Fund can be found on our website: www.cleanairfund.org.

Clean Air Fund's Europe portfolio supports a variety of projects and partners with the overall objective of supporting transposition and implementation of Europe's recently adopted Ambient Air Quality Directive (AAQD).

About the project

The problem

The revised AAQD significantly raises the level of ambition for air quality across the EU by 2030; however, national, regional, and local authorities often face challenges in translating these legal requirements into timely and practical implementation pathways. While the AAQD sets clear objectives and deadlines, the specific measures should be designed, financed, and implemented at the regional and local levels. In practice, however, regional, and local authorities may lack the technical capacity, modelling tools or practical guidance

to properly assess which combinations of policies (such as low-emission zones, traffic restrictions, domestic coal and wood-burning bans, clean heating subsidy schemes or fleet renewal standards) can deliver compliance by 2030. This is especially true in the most polluted regions of the European Union where the situation is rendered more challenging by the complexity of the emission sources themselves. Moreover, the links between improved air quality and health and climate co-benefits are often poorly understood, and decision-makers working on transport, heating, climate, equity, or health do not collaborate sufficiently to address the cross-cutting issue of air pollution in an integrated way.

The proposed solution. Scope of work

Core components:

1. Targeted technical assistance for regional and local implementation:

The consortium will provide tailored technical assistance through a modular catalogue of support, allowing regional and local authorities to select the elements most relevant to their specific needs and context. This includes:

- Modelling air pollution (PM_{2.5}, NO₂) reduction policy scenarios and developing sectoral transition pathways to meet the revised AAQD limit values—particularly in transport and domestic heating—by translating plausible policy packages into emissions and concentration reductions, in a form usable for Air Quality Plans and Air Quality Roadmaps. Where applicable, modelling should also test alignment with stricter WHO air quality guideline levels and identify the additional policy measures required to reach them, alongside the pathway to legal compliance and required timelines.
- Mapping pollution hotspots and identifying priority sources to inform cost effective and targeted measures.
- Assessment of the climate co-benefit analysis of proposed measures (CO₂ emissions).
- Assessment of the social and political acceptability of proposed air quality measures, complemented by a high-level consideration of costs and benefits (including health benefits), to support prioritisation and implementation. Where relevant, this assessment may draw on existing evidence and insights (e.g. health benefits, public attitudes, behavioural responses, or perceived trade-offs).
- Support the development of regional Air Quality Plans and Air Quality Roadmaps.
- Ensuring alignment between Air Quality Roadmaps and wider national strategies and plans such as National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs), National Air Pollution Control Programmes, Social Climate Plans (SCPs) the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and related building renovation strategies, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs), and national transport and decarbonisation strategies, as relevant.

- Support to identify finance for implementation, including mapping relevant EU, national and regional funding opportunities, and providing high-level guidance on structuring investable measures and projects.

Through this needs-based catalogue of technical support, authorities can develop concrete implementation pathways showing how the new AAQD limit values can be achieved on time, moving from legal obligations to practical, evidence-based decisions that support timely compliance and reduce the risk of delays in implementation.

2. Capacity-building, peer learning and exchange:

Alongside direct technical assistance, the project will strengthen regional capacity through structured peer learning and dialogue, facilitating exchange among regions and cities, share replicable models for socially acceptable and politically feasible implementation, and strengthen regional capacity on modelling, monitoring, compliance assessment and implementation tools, including practical guidance on measures such as low-emission zones, clean heating standards and mobility reforms. By forming opportunities for regions facing similar challenges to learn from each other and adapt proven approaches, this component supports faster uptake of effective solutions and helps reduce duplication of effort across countries and regions.

Optional components:

3. Optional component of targeted technical assistance for regional and local implementation

- More detailed economic cost-benefit analysis of the proposed measures, to support informed decision-making and finer-grained prioritisation.
- Health impact assessments, including an equity lens, to evaluate the health and distributional impacts of air pollution reduction measures examining who benefits and who bears costs. This includes analysing the impacts of both air pollution and the proposed policy measures on the most vulnerable and low-income populations in the targeted regions, ensuring that equity considerations are explicitly integrated into policy design and implementation.

4. Focused multi-stakeholder engagement to support implementation:

In coordination with other relevant CAF funded projects and air quality initiatives in each country, the project will convene structured dialogues at regional level to support authorities in testing implementation pathways, assessing socio-economic and political acceptability, and building local ownership of proposed measures. These dialogues are intended to support and inform the technical work, helping ensure that proposed measures are feasible to implement and supported by key local actors, and promote connections between health and environmental stakeholders at governmental and non-governmental level.

Support will be prioritised for regional and local authorities facing the highest compliance risks. The final selection of regions will be identified through a combination of analysis of transposition and compliance risks, and structured conversations with key stakeholders in target countries (including government officials and civil society leaders).

Geographic scope:

The project will aim to cover at least two air quality zones or agglomerations* per country, as defined under the AAQD, in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Romania and Bulgaria.

This geographic coverage represents the preferred scope of the proposal; final country coverage will depend on the consortium's capacities, local presence, and existing partnerships, and may therefore cover a subset of these countries.

The final selection of zones/agglomerations per country will be confirmed during early project scoping, based on criteria including pollution levels, risk of non-compliance, institutional readiness, and interest from competent authorities.

**Note: In line with the AAQD, the term "zones and agglomerations" refers to the territorial units used for air quality assessment and management under EU legislation. These may not necessarily correspond to administrative regions.*

Project duration and budget

Indicative project period: August 2026 – December 2027.

Clean Air Fund has budgeted for a maximum contribution of up to EUR 2.8 million for the entire scope of work and complete duration of the project. We request that bidders provide an indicative split of these funds in their proposal, based on project activities and outcome proposed in this EOI, as well as the countries covered. At EOI stage, we are looking for a high-level and indicative budget only. Detailed costing will be requested from shortlisted applicants at full proposal stage.

What is the Clean Air Fund looking for?

The following criteria will be used to assess the proposals submitted.

1. **Experience and technical suitability:** Demonstrated experience in leading complex, multi-country technical assistance projects, ideally including modelling or analytical work to support pathways towards environmental and/or social targets; and production of policy-relevant outputs to support decision-making.
2. **Consortium strength and country coverage.** A strong and credible consortium is expected, with proven experience working in the relevant countries, established relationships with national, regional or local stakeholders responsible for AAQD transposition and implementation, and practical experience supporting the development or implementation of air quality roadmaps, plans and comparable policy instruments. As part of the consortium, and preferably as the leading partner, we would particularly welcome not-for-profit research organisations or networks of cities and / or regions. The consortium should include modellers to work alongside policy and air quality experts. Optional but strongly desirable capacities include economists, health modellers, sectoral experts (e.g. transport, buildings, energy) and equity experts, as well as facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes and coordination across sectors, countries, and regions.
3. **Quality and creativity:** in proposing an approach that meets the objectives and ensures the success of the work.
4. **Value for money:** a cost-effective and efficient delivery model that demonstrates an appropriate use of resources, proportional to the scope and objectives of the work, and maximises impact within the available budget.

What to include in your expression of interest

CAF invites a consortium of diverse and experienced organisations to submit an Expression of Interest providing a concise, high-level overview of their proposed approach, relevant experience, and indicative budget. EOIs will be used to understand the range of potential delivery models, consortium composition, and approaches. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview and to submit a full proposal.

EOIs should be no longer than five pages and should include the elements below.

1. **Strategic Approach.** How will you approach the project? Please outline your broad approach, including key activities, milestones, and the expected interim outcomes. Clearly indicate which geography (countries) you can cover and whether you plan to deliver on the optional component.
2. **Consortium composition and track record.** Describe the proposed consortium and lead partner, outlining the role and responsibilities of each partner, identifying which partner(s)

would lead delivery in each country, and explaining how the consortium’s collective and individual experience is relevant to the project outputs. Please include concrete examples of previous work that demonstrate the consortium’s ability to deliver high-quality technical analysis, modelling and policy-relevant research in national or sub-national contexts, as well as its capacity to support the uptake and impact of this work through communications, engagement or policy processes that effectively reach decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders. The description should also indicate the languages spoken by the teams involved in delivery.

3. **Equity and inclusivity.** Explain how the consortium will ensure a participatory, inclusive, and equitable approach in the design, governance, and delivery of the project, including engagement with affected communities and relevant stakeholders where appropriate.
4. **Budget and timeline.** Provide a high-level, indicative budget and timeline for the proposed activities. Detailed costings will be requested at full proposal stage.
5. **References/Recommendations.** Provided by organizations and/or individuals which received similar support. Annex, not included in the 5 pages.

How to submit your expression of interest and process

To submit your expression of interest, please send your response to the five questions above and any additional information deemed relevant in document format to cdelasota@cleanairfund.org cc: hborst@cleanairfund.org by the deadline set out below.

Timeline

Activity	Deadline
Publish Expression of Interest	17/04/2026
Deadline for questions	04/05/2026
Deadline for Expression of Interest	11/05/2026
Review of Expressions of Interest	12/05/2026 to 19/05/2026
Clean Air Fund send invitations for a full proposal	22/05/2026
Deadline for submitting the full proposal	24/06/2026
Interviews to take place	Week of 29/06/2026
Clean Air Fund decision on the winning offer	Week of 06/07/2026
Contracting	July 2026