



# **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)**

## **Call for proposals**

Call for proposals to promote gender equality  
(CERV-2026-GE)

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## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of gender equality under the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Value Programme (CERV)**. The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (CERV Regulation [2021/692](#)<sup>1</sup>).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2026-27 Work Programme<sup>2</sup> and will be managed by the **European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST)**.

The call covers the following **topics**:

Priority	Topic	Priorities
1	CERV-2026-GE-WORK-LIFE	Supporting work-life balance, equal share of care responsibilities, family-friendly policies among employers and the value of care sector jobs.
2	CERV-2026-GE-PAY-TRANSP-DIR	Promoting and supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive and respect of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value.
3	CERV-2026-GE-EQUAL-PART-REP	Supporting equal participation and representation of women and men in economic and political decision-making.
4	CERV-2026-GE-GENDER-STEREO	Tackling gender stereotypes in media and advertising.

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Furthermore, the same application can only be submitted to one topic. **Applicants cannot submit more than one proposal as coordinator.**

<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/692 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (OJ L 156, 5.5.2021, p. 1).

<sup>2</sup> [Commission Implementing Decision](#) on the financing of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2026-2027

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the [Model Grant Agreement](#), the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

You are also encouraged to visit the [CERV Programme Project Result webpage](#), [Europe for Citizens Programme Project Results website](#), [REC Programme results webpage](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

## 1. Background

The Roadmap for Women's Rights, adopted on 5 March 2025 and broadly endorsed by all Member States and various EU institutions and stakeholders in October 2025, sets out the Commission's long-term vision for a gender equal society. It contains a declaration of eight women's rights principles as well as the objectives that need to be pursued to uphold and advance these principles. The Roadmap serves as a guiding compass for policymakers, including for the new EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030 that is expected to be adopted in March 2026. The four priorities of this call reflect several of these principles and objectives.

### - **Work-life balance and care**

Principle 4 of the Roadmap highlights the importance of work-life balance for gender equality, calling for equal sharing of care, for work-life balance working conditions that

facilitate reconciliation between working, family and private life, encouragement of uptake of family leaves by fathers, and for a widespread access to flexible work arrangements for all (not only for working parents), for affordable and accessible high-quality early childhood education and care and long-term care and for promoting investment and formal employment in the care sector, ensuring quality care jobs.

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025<sup>3</sup> identifies tackling the gender care gap as one of the key actions to enhance equal economic participation of women and men. Women still carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid work and often adapt their work patterns to their caring responsibilities and how these duties are shared with a partner.

The Work-Life Balance Directive<sup>4</sup> aims at encouraging a better sharing of care responsibilities between women and men. It foresees rights to family leaves, including paternity leave, non-transferable parental leave and carers' leave as well as the right to request flexible working time arrangements. Member States had to implement the Directive by August 2022.

#### - **Equal Pay**

The Roadmap for Women's Rights, in its Principle 3: "Equal pay and economic empowerment", aims to ensure that every woman has the right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and to be economically independent, and highlights in that respect the objective of tackling the undervaluation of jobs predominantly done by women and ensuring pay transparency.

Addressing the gender pay and pension gap is also one of the aims of the 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy. To achieve this aim the Commission tabled binding measures on pay transparency. They were adopted by the co-legislators in May 2023<sup>5</sup> and Member States have 3 years to transpose them into national legislation by June 2026. The Directive (EU) 2023/970 complements the EU legal framework on equal pay already in place, comprising Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)<sup>6</sup> and the 2014 Commission Recommendation on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency<sup>7</sup>.

The new Pay Transparency Directive aims at strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay, and, in particular, unveiling and tackling conscious or unconscious bias in pay that often leads to an undervaluation of work predominantly done by women. To that aim it sets a clear framework and criteria for the application of the concept of "work of equal value" and proposes pay transparency measures, including pay reporting, to reveal bias and discrimination in pay structures.

The Directive recognises an important role that social partners can play in the promotion and application of the equal pay principle. Member States may involve social partners in the implementation of the Directive (Art.33), for instance in the

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<sup>3</sup> A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>

<sup>4</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj/eng>

<sup>5</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023L0970>

<sup>6</sup> [Directive - 2006/54 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

<sup>7</sup> [EUR-Lex - 32014H0124 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

development of tools for assessment and comparison of work of equal value. The Directive also requires Member States (Art. 13) to promote the role of social partners and ensure their involvement in the promotion of equal pay and tackling pay discrimination, without prejudice to their autonomy and in accordance with national law or practice.

The Directive also puts an emphasis on the support given to relevant actors to ensure compliance with pay transparency measures. In line with the Directive (Art. 9(8)), Member States can replace employers' pay reporting obligation by extracting and compiling the data from administrative data available to the national tax and/or social security institutions. While Article 11 requires Member States to provide support, in the form of technical assistance and training, to employers with fewer than 250 workers and to the workers' representatives concerned.

In line with Art.4(3) of the Directive, the European Institute for Gender Equality is preparing a new step-by-step toolkit on gender-neutral job evaluation and classification, building on the existing Commission guidance. This will include a dedicated easy tool targeted to micro, small and medium-sized companies. The toolkit will be available in spring 2026.

#### - **Equal representation in decision-making**

Principle 7 "Political participation and equal representation" of the Roadmap for Women's Rights calls for promoting gender-balanced representation in positions of responsibility and decision-making and women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all spheres and at all levels of public and political life.

The 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy recalls that women remain underrepresented in politics and that increasing their participation and representation is a pre-condition for a well-functioning democracy and leads to more effective policy-making<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, diversity of talents enhances decision-making, corporate governance, and economic growth. Despite progress, women's under-representation persists in Europe's business and industry sectors as well<sup>9</sup>.

The 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy also emphasises the added value of gender balance on corporate boards. Adopted in 2022, Directive 2022/2381 "Women on Boards" aims to improve the gender-balance among directors in large, EU-listed companies. By 30 June 2026, Member States shall ensure that at least 40% of non-executive director positions or that at least 33% of all director positions are occupied by members of the underrepresented sex. The remaining provisions of the Directive had to be transposed by Member States into national law by December 2024.

#### - **Tackling gender stereotypes**

The Roadmap for Women's Rights, in its Principle 8 "Institutional mechanisms that deliver on women's rights", calls for the design and use of digital tools mindful of gender equality, bias and gender stereotypes. Principle 7 on Political participation and equal representation also calls for preventing and combating sexism in media and advertisement.

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<sup>8</sup> According to 2025 [Eurostat data](#), 33,4 % of members of the national parliaments are women; 38,5 % of members of European parliament are women

<sup>9</sup> Only 34.7 % of board members in the EU are women:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_25\\_22](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_22)

Tackling gender-based stereotypes is also one of the priorities under the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and addressing them is a crucial issue for European societies. Gender stereotypes are a root cause of gender inequality and affect all areas of society. Gender stereotypes, as a generalisation of the behaviours and characteristics attributed to or expected from women or men, are often perpetuated in media and advertising e.g. by referring to gender roles in domestic tasks or the portrayal of women more generally. However, media and advertising can also play a strong role in breaking those stereotypes by presenting different attitudes and images. This is why initiatives to tackle gender stereotypes in this sector should be encouraged.

## **2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact**

### Objectives

Supporting, advancing and implementing comprehensive policies to promote women's full enjoyment of rights, gender equality, including work-life balance, equal pay between women and men, women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming.

Policy initiative supported:

- Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025<sup>10</sup>;
- Roadmap for Women's Rights<sup>11</sup>;
- European Care Strategy<sup>12</sup>;
- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers<sup>13</sup>;
- Council Recommendation on Early Childhood Education and Care: the Barcelona targets for 2030<sup>14</sup>
- Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services<sup>15</sup>;
- Digital Education Action Plan (2021-27)<sup>16</sup>;

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<sup>10</sup>A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>

<sup>11</sup>Declaration for a gender-equal society endorsed in Brussels on 16 October 2025 [https://commission.europa.eu/document/6342a1c7-acb4-4ed5-827a-14e67926afad\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/document/6342a1c7-acb4-4ed5-827a-14e67926afad_en)

<sup>12</sup> [A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers](#) - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu).

<sup>13</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj/eng>

<sup>14</sup> [Council recommendation on Early Childhood Education and Care: the Barcelona targets for 2030](#)

<sup>15</sup> Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2004/113/oj/eng>

<sup>16</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/actions>



- Directive (EU) 2023/970<sup>17</sup> to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (Pay Transparency Directive);
- Directive 2006/54/EC<sup>18</sup> of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast);
- Commission Recommendation of 7 March 2014 on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency<sup>19</sup>;
- Directive (EU) 2022/2381 "Women on Boards"<sup>20</sup>.

### *Themes and priorities (scope)*

National, local and regional authorities, social partners (workers and business representatives), labour inspectorates, equality bodies and civil society organisations, in particular women's rights organisations, and other stakeholders, are invited to submit projects (see eligibility criteria in point 6) within the following four priorities:

1. Supporting work-life balance, equal share of care responsibilities, family-friendly policies among employers and the value of care sector jobs.
2. Promoting and supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive and respect of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value.
3. Supporting equal participation and representation of women and men in economic and political decision-making.
4. Tackling gender stereotypes in media and advertising.

#### **1. Supporting work-life balance, equal share of care responsibilities, family-friendly policies among employers and the value of care sector jobs**

The European Care Strategy highlights the importance of affordable, accessible and high-quality care services, with a view to enhancing women's labour market participation and gender equality and encouraging sustainable working conditions of those in care jobs, so far predominantly women. The Council Recommendation on Early Childhood Education and Care: the Barcelona targets for 2030<sup>21</sup> aims at ensuring upward convergence across Member States in this area. The Roadmap on Women's Rights stresses the importance of work-life balance and care for gender equality, including through working conditions that foster reconciliation between work, family and private life.

The aim of this priority is to support:

- Promotion of family-friendly practices among employers in the public and private sectors, encouraging the take up of the new rights under the Work-life

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<sup>17</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023L0970>

<sup>18</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj/eng>

<sup>19</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2014/124/oj/eng>

<sup>20</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L\\_.2022.315.01.0044.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2022.315.01.0044.01.ENG)

<sup>21</sup> [Council recommendation on Early Childhood Education and Care: the Barcelona targets for 2030](#)

Balance Directive by both women and men (including family leaves, new ways of work organisation, telework and hybrid working, flexibility of hours, shorter working week, job sharing ...);

- Prevention and protection against any form of unfavourable treatment and discrimination of women during and after pregnancy as well as of women and men who took family leave (maternity/paternity/parental/carer leave) and flexible work arrangements;
- Promotion of equal sharing of informal care work, in particular by encouraging the role of men in informal care work and family responsibilities (for own children and dependents), including by encouraging men to take parental, paternity leave and flexible working arrangements as well as encouraging equal sharing of informal care and housework;
- Promotion of the value of formal (paid) care work by reflecting on the appreciation of skills needed for care work, including soft skills, the intensity of the work and other aspects of working conditions in care jobs and encourage the involvement of men in formal care work, both in the childcare and long-term care sectors.

Indicative budget: 7 EUR million

## **2. Promoting and supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive and respect of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value**

Pay transparency measures empower workers to claim their rights but not only. They also help businesses to attract and retain talents, with positive impact on business profitability and the functioning of the internal market. Showcasing fair and transparent pay within an organisation can help to reduce turnover rates and increase employee engagement, create a positive workplace culture, and improve trust between workers, employers and investors. The Directive (EU) 2023/970 sets concrete obligations concerning pay transparency and establishes the criteria for assessment of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value.

The aim of this priority is to support social partners and all relevant stakeholders and facilitate compliance with the pay transparency obligations laid down in Directive 2023/970 and promote the respect of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value between women and men.

In particular, it aims to support:

- reporting on pay gap between female and male workers by employers in line with Art. 9 of the Directive (EU) 2023/970;
- setting or adapting pay structures to ensure equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between women and men in line with Art. 4 of the Directive (EU) 2023/970, both at individual employer level and within collective agreements;
- effective social dialogue to help strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between women and men.

Applicants are **required** to clearly explain how their projects ensure alignment with the requirements of Pay Transparency Directive 2023/970, and how they will support the implementation of the EU acquis related to the principle of equal pay and pay transparency, as well as national transposition and implementation in this field.

Applicants are also **encouraged to engage relevant public authorities** in support of their project, to help achieving long-term sustainability of project results and outcomes, in line with the objectives of Pay Transparency Directive.

These public authorities can be national, regional or local authorities, agencies or equality bodies competent for the monitoring or implementation of pay transparency measures and/or competent in the matters of equal pay between women and men more broadly. The rationale for the choice must be documented and explained in Part B Project description and implementation. This support can be expressed in different ways, either the public authority can be partner or associated partner in the project, or it can express its support through an Annex to the application (support letter from the public authority).

Indicative budget: 5 EUR million

### **3. Supporting equal participation and representation of women and men in economic and political decision-making**

In line with the objectives of the 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy and to support in particular the implementation of the Women on Boards Directive 2022/2381, the aim of this priority is to support stakeholders involved in initiatives increasing women's participation and representation in economic and political decision-making. The priority focuses on supporting gender balance in management and leadership positions in the corporate sector and in politics. Indeed, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions in political and economic life in EU Member States<sup>22</sup>.

In line with the 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy and to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>23</sup>, the Commission will support Member States and relevant stakeholders in developing and implementing effective strategies to increase the representation and participation of women in decision making in politics and in the corporate sector. To address the remaining challenges to achieving equal participation/representation of women and men in political and economic life, coordinated action is required in a wide range of areas, with fundamental changes, policies, measures and targeted actions that remove both societal and structural obstacles bearing in mind the need to strengthen women's leadership and participation. Projects should take into account in their objectives and activities women in all their diversity.

Indicative budget: 6 EUR million

### **4. Tackling gender stereotypes in media and advertising**

With this priority of the call, we intend to support projects that will challenge gender stereotypes and address conscious or unconscious gender bias, paying attention to explicit or implicit expectations with regard to roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society generally considers appropriate for women or for men, girls or boys, with a specific focus on how to effectively tackle gender stereotypes in media and advertising.

Indicative budget: 5 EUR million

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<sup>22</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/wmidm>

<sup>23</sup> [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development](#)

Activities that can be funded (scope)

**1. Supporting work-life balance, equal share of care responsibilities, family-friendly policies among employers and the value of care sector jobs**

- **[Work-life balance with employers]** Capacity building and training for employers in the public and private sector, in particular of human resources managers, on the introduction of family-friendly working arrangements and family leaves for both women and men, as well as promotion of the rights laid down in the Work-Life Balance Directive and of the benefits of family-friendly policies in workplaces.
- **[Promoting equal sharing of informal care]** Development and/or provision of training and support activities targeted at men on a) parenting, i.e. focussing on skills, support, and engagement with their children or b) long-term care for dependents focussing on skills, support and engagement with the care-recipients as well as promoting the benefits of equal sharing of care responsibilities between men and women.
- **[Tackling horizontal segregation]** Activities by educational organisations, competent public authorities or care service providers, to attract boys and men to care fields of study, training and employment and to promote the participation of men in the care profession (both for early childhood education and long-term care).

**2. Promoting and supporting the implementation of the provisions of the Pay Transparency Directive and respect of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value**

- Development of ready-made tools for national or regional reporting systems on pay gaps between female and male workers in Member States (in line with Article 9 of the Directive (EU) 2023/970), in particular the development of digital pay reporting tools, technical support for their use and training for employers, as well as the dissemination and promotion of these tools.
- Development of pay reporting systems on pay gaps between female and male workers on the basis of administrative data (in line with Art.9(8) of the Directive (EU) 2023/970) to facilitate the fulfilment of reporting obligations by employers set in the Directive.
- Development of support for employers with fewer than 250 workers and for worker representatives (in line with Article 11 of the Directive (EU) 2023/970), in the form of technical assistance, guidance and training on pay information, pay reporting, joint pay assessment and job evaluation, as well as the dissemination and promotion of these activities or materials.
- Development and conduct of guidance and training programmes, as well as good practice and awareness raising by and for social partners to build their capacity in the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, including implementation of gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems, assessment of existing job evaluation systems and pay classification schemes, as well as capacity to negotiate on equal pay.
- Awareness raising, including via social media or press campaigns at national or regional level, on the benefits and advantages of equal pay and the implementation of pay transparency measures.

### **3. Supporting equal participation and representation of women and men in economic and political decision-making**

Regarding **gender balance in politics**:

- Development and and/or implementation of comprehensive national strategies by Member States' responsible authorities to achieve equal participation/representation of women and men in political life.
- development and/or organisation of coaching, mentoring, networking and targeted training initiatives for women political candidates and/or elected representatives, including the development and/or conduct of training programmes and other capacity building activities; and/or development and/or organisation of trainings on gender balance in politics and unconscious gender bias for political leaders (both men and women).
- activities that promote gender-sensitive, family-friendly, inclusive, gender balanced and accessible parliaments or governments at national, regional or local level in view of increasing women's participation and representation in political decision-making.

Activities supporting individual political parties will not be funded through this call.

For proposals focussing on the role of women in political life, it is strongly encouraged to involve a public authority, including regional and local authorities, to actively participate in the projects. These public authorities can be national, regional or local Ministries/agencies/equality bodies responsible for gender equality and education authorities etc., as relevant. The rationale for the choice must be documented and explained in Part B Project description and implementation. This support will be expressed through an Annex to the application (support letter from the public authority) and will be assessed under the award criterion 2 Quality.

Regarding **gender balance on company boards**:

- Development of guidance, tools, and checklists for the elaboration of objective and merit-based criteria for the selection of members of company boards/directors in line with Directive 2022/2381.

### **4. Tackling gender stereotypes in media and advertising**

- Capacity building and training for relevant professionals, in particular for professionals in the media and advertising sectors, such as journalists, advertisement professionals, script writers etc.
- Supporting activities that aim at combatting gender stereotypes in media and advertising (e.g. codes of conduct, guidance for professionals, awareness-raising activities, gender-sensitive awards/labels for media and advertisement organisations).

Projects involving media professionals (e.g. media outlets, social media platforms, professional organisations or regulatory bodies) and advertising self-regulatory organisations will be given preference.

### **Projects focusing only on research will not be financed under this call.**

Projects' design and implementation are expected to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming. Applicants should include in their proposal a [gender-analysis](#) that maps gender-specific needs and risks. Given the specific scope of the call, projects are expected not to have any unintended negative effects on either gender, not to reproduce gender-stereotypes in their activities and to go beyond the basic do no-harm approach.<sup>24</sup>

The gender equality perspective should also be taken into account when designing the 'format' of activities such as mutual learning, awareness raising and possible training activities, to ensure that they allow for balanced participation of women, men, girls and boys as well as that they promote gender-sensitive approaches. For the promotion of gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems, applicants are advised to pay particular attention to gender-biases that might be induced based on historic data.

Projects can be national or transnational. Transnational projects are particularly encouraged.

### **Expected impact**

#### **1. Supporting work-life balance, equal share of care responsibilities, family-friendly policies among employers and the value of care sector jobs**

- Increased awareness of policy measures, particularly those set out in the Work-Life Balance Directive, and a higher number of good practice examples by companies and public authorities that contribute to gender equality in the workplace and balanced work-life integration;
- Better identification of barriers to gender equality, including obstacles to equal sharing of care and domestic work, and challenges in accessing family leave and family-friendly working time arrangements;
- Increased knowledge of working conditions in care work and the value of care work;
- Improved awareness of policy measures and good practice examples that lead to more sustainable working conditions in care work and that address gender segregation in the care sector;

#### **2. Promoting and supporting the implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive and respect of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value**

- Improved national and organisational capacities to report on the gender pay gap in line with the requirements of the Directive (EU) 2023/970;
- Improved capacity of employers to set non-discriminatory pay structures;
- Increased capacity of social partners to assess, negotiate and revise collective agreements in line with the requirements of the Pay Transparency Directive;
- More transparent pay systems and better detection of indirect pay discrimination related to the undervaluation of jobs typically done by women;
- Increased capacity and empowerment of workers, equality bodies and civil society organisations to negotiate fair working conditions and defend their rights;

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<sup>24</sup> For more information see section Ethics and EU values

- Increased awareness of the equal pay law and purpose and benefits of gender-neutral job evaluations and classification systems;
- Increased awareness of the Pay Transparency Directive and its benefits for the EU economy and workers' rights.

### **3. Supporting equal participation and representation of women and men in political and economic decision-making**

- Contribution to the achievement of equal representation of women and men in governments and national/regional/local parliaments and assemblies;
- Improved design, implementation and monitoring of policies at national, regional and local level to ensure balanced gender representation in decision-making roles across politics, public life and corporate leadership and management;
- Increased capacity of national, regional and local authorities and their associations, civil society organisations (in particular women's CSOs) and the media to overcome barriers to women's representation in politics, public debate and management positions in the corporate sector;
- Strengthened cooperation and increased networking and exchange of information between Member State governments, local and regional authorities and their associations, equality bodies, civil society organisations, in particular women's organisations, the media and academics;
- Improved rules/procedures in political organisations and citizen's engagement that contribute to balanced gender representation and participation in political life;
- Increased capacity/empowerment of female candidates/elected representatives to have an active role in politics;
- Increased awareness about gender unconscious bias among political leaders;
- Increased awareness of the benefits of gender balanced political leadership;
- Increased awareness and better implementation of the Directive 2022/2081 on gender balanced boards in Member States.

### **4. Tackling gender stereotypes in media and advertising**

- Counter gender stereotypes and negative gender roles in media, including social media, and in advertising by raising awareness and training the relevant professionals
- Media and advertising content that does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.



For more information see:

#### **Bibliography**

#### **Policy documents/background information:**

- EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)
- EU Roadmap for Women's Rights: [https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/eu-roadmap-womens-rights-renewed-push-gender-equality-2025-03-07\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/eu-roadmap-womens-rights-renewed-push-gender-equality-2025-03-07_en)
- Work-Life Balance Directive: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj/eng>
- A European Care Strategy for caregivers and care receivers: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10382>

- Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023L0970>
- 2021 Opinion of the Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on Combatting Gender Stereotypes: [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/01a4c140-26eb-43b3-95e6-5a91408a8ffc\\_en?filename=opinion\\_combatting\\_gender\\_stereotypes\\_2021\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/01a4c140-26eb-43b3-95e6-5a91408a8ffc_en?filename=opinion_combatting_gender_stereotypes_2021_en.pdf)
- 2021 Opinion of the Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on the Care Gap in the EU: a holistic and gender transformative approach: [Advisory Committee on Eq Opps Women and Men-Opinion care gap 2021 en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/01a4c140-26eb-43b3-95e6-5a91408a8ffc_en?filename=opinion_combatting_gender_stereotypes_2021_en.pdf)
- 2013 Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2013) 512 final accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the application of Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2013:0512:FIN:EN:PDF>
- Directive (EU) 2022/2381 "Women on Boards": [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L\\_.2022.315.01.0044.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2022.315.01.0044.01.ENG)

### **Gender Mainstreaming:**

- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)'s guidance on Gender Mainstreaming: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming>

### **Behavioral insights:**

- Joana Sousa Lourenço, Emanuele Ciriolo, Sara Rafael Almeida, and Xavier Troussard. Behavioural insights applied to policy: European Report 2016: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research/crosscutting-activities/behavioural-insights>

## **3. Available budget**

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 23 000 000**.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.



## 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	29 January 2026
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>28 April 2026 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	April - October 2026
Information on evaluation results:	October 2026
GA signature:	November 2026 – February 2027

## 5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable section 4*).

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (*template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*)
- KPI tool — contains additional project data regarding the project's contribution to EU programme key performance indicators (*to be filled in directly online, all sections to be completed*)
- **Mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*some templates are available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
  - detailed budget table (*template available in the Portal Submission System – to be re-uploaded filled out in the format .xlsx*) (**mandatory**)
  - CVs (standard) of core project team (**mandatory**)
  - activity report of the coordinator (activity report of last year) (**mandatory** – public bodies are exempted)
  - list of previous projects of the coordinator (key projects for the last 4 years) (**mandatory** - *template available in Part B, recently established*)

*organisations are expected to provide an empty form in case they did not implement any key projects in the past)*

- Declaration by the coordinator attesting that they participate only once in the role of coordinator under this call for proposals (**mandatory** – *free format, signed by the coordinator*).
- for participants with activities involving children (below the age of 18): child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#). (for private bodies: copy of their policy; for public bodies: child protection policy declaration). **(mandatory)**

Please note that an annual activity report is NOT a financial audit report or balance sheet, but a report highlighting the activities and projects of your organisation.

Please be aware that since **the detailed budget table** serves as the basis for fixing the lump sums for the grants (and since lump sums must be reliable proxies for the actual costs of a project<sup>25</sup>), the costs you include MUST comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6](#)). This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must comply with best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and be free of any conflict of interests. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the grant may be reduced (even later on during the project implementation or after their end).

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **45 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

## 6. Eligibility

### Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies);
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories

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<sup>25</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/horizon/lump-sum/guidance>

(OCTs))

– non-EU countries:

- countries associated to the CERV Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))

Please check the list regularly, to get the latest status on countries in the process of association.

- Organisations which are profit-oriented may apply only in partnership with public entities or private non-profit organisations;
- Activities must take place in any of the eligible countries;
- The project can be either **national or transnational**;

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc (*see section 13*).

### *Specific cases and definitions*

**Natural persons** — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

**International organisations** — International organisations are eligible. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

**Entities without legal personality** — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>26</sup>.

**EU bodies** — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.


**Programme Contact Points** — Are eligible as coordinator or beneficiary in this call, if they have procedures to segregate the project management and the information provision functions and if they are able to demonstrate cost separation (i.e. that their project grants do not cover any costs which are covered by their other grant). This requires the following:

- use of analytical accounting which allows for a cost accounting management with cost allocation keys and cost accounting codes AND application of these keys and codes to identify and separate the costs (i.e. to allocate them to either one of the two grants)
- recording of all real costs incurred for the activities that are covered by the two grants (including the indirect costs)
- allocation of the costs in a way that leads to a fair, objective and realistic result

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<sup>26</sup> See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

**Associations and interest groupings** — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'<sup>27</sup>.

 Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

**Countries currently negotiating association agreements** — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations (*see above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

**EU restrictive measures** — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*)<sup>28</sup>. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

**EU conditionality measures** — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092<sup>29</sup>. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc). Currently such measures are in place for public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 16 December 2022).

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of **at least two applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities nor associated partners)**, which complies with the following conditions:

- the beneficiaries must be public entities or private organisations, duly established in one of the eligible countries, or an international organisation. Organisations which are profit-oriented must submit applications in partnership with public entities or private non-profit organisations.

Other conditions:

- The lead applicant (i.e. "Coordinator") **cannot submit more than one application under this call for proposals, across all priorities/topics**. In case of multiple proposals submitted by the same lead applicant, **all the proposals will be rejected and will not be evaluated further**.

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<sup>27</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

<sup>28</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>29</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

### Eligible activities

Applications will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds wholly (or at least in part) to the topic description for which they are submitted.

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Projects should take into account the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc). Projects must also respect EU values and European Commission policy regarding reputational matters (*e.g. activities involving capacity building, policy support, awareness raising, communication, dissemination, etc*)<sup>30</sup>.

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

### Geographic location (target countries)

Proposals must relate to activities taking place in the eligible countries (*see above*).

### Duration

Projects must range between **12 and 24 months**.

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

### Project budget

Requested grant amounts cannot be lower than **EUR 100 000 and higher than EUR 500 000** in all priorities.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

### Ethics and EU values

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards and
- EU values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and
- other applicable EU, international and national law (including the General Data Protection Regulation [2016/679](#)).

Projects must seek to promote gender equality and non-discrimination mainstreaming in accordance with the [Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#). Project activities should contribute to the equal empowerment of women and men in all their diversity, ensuring that they achieve their full potential and enjoy the same rights. They should also seek to reduce levels of discrimination suffered by particular groups (as well as those at risk of multiple discrimination) and to improve equality outcomes for individuals. Proposals should integrate gender and non-discrimination considerations in proposals and target a gender-balanced representation in project teams and

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<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, [Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy](#).

activities. It is also important that individual data collected by the beneficiaries are broken down by sex ([sex-disaggregated data](#)), disability or age whenever possible.

Applicants must show in their application that they respect ethical principles and EU values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Participants with activities involving children must moreover have a child protection policy covering the four areas described in the [Keeping Children Safe Child Safeguarding Standards](#). This policy must be available online and transparent to everyone who comes in contact with the organisation. It must include clear information about the recruitment of staff (including trainees and volunteers) and include background checks (vetting). It must also include clear procedures and rules to staff, including reporting rules, and continuous training.

## 7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

### Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc*). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for coordinators, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the project requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
  - an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities (*see below, section 10*)
  - prefinancing paid in instalments
  - (one or more) prefinancing guarantees (*see below, section 10*)
- or
- propose no prefinancing
  - request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Quality' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following information:

- general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- activity report of last year of the coordinator
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*).

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check.

### Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>31</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>32</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of

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<sup>31</sup> See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

<sup>32</sup> 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.



representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted<sup>33</sup> an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that<sup>34</sup>:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

## 8. Evaluation and award procedure

The proposals will have to follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation)

An **evaluation committee** (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, see *sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria (see *sections 7 and 9*) and then ranked according to their scores.

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:

Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order: the *ex aequo* proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their

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<sup>33</sup> 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

<sup>34</sup> See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).



scores for the criterion 'Quality'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

 **No commitment for funding** — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.*

**Grant preparation** will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Full compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending will be considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)). Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

## 9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

- **Relevance:** extent to which the proposal matches the priorities and objectives of the call; clearly defined needs and robust needs assessment; clearly defined target group, with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account; contribution to the EU strategic and legislative context; European/trans-national dimension; impact/interest for a number of countries (EU or eligible non-EU countries); possibility to use the results in other countries (potential for transfer of good practices); potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation, building synergies and avoiding duplication with previous projects (40 points)
- **Quality:** clarity and consistency of project; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project with gender perspective being appropriately taken into account (organisation of work, timetable, allocation of resources and distribution of tasks between partners, risks & risk management, monitoring and evaluation); ethical issues and measures/policies to guarantee full compliance with EU values are addressed; feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; financial feasibility (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation); cost-effectiveness (best value for money) (40 points)
- **Impact:** ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; potential for a positive multiplier effect; sustainability of results after EU funding ends (20 points)

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	25	40
Quality	n/a	40
Impact	n/a	20
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance': 25/40 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual threshold for the criterion 'Relevance' AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

Particular attention will be paid to **the quality, relevance and soundness of the partnership and overall consortium composition**. Applicants are expected to justify that the size and structure of the consortium are appropriate and proportionate to the project's objectives, activities and budget. The partnership should be coherent and well-balanced, bringing together organisations with complementary expertise and experience. Each partner should demonstrate clear added value and a meaningful contribution to the implementation of the action. During the evaluation, it will be thoroughly assessed under the Quality criterion whether the consortium composition is justified and suitable to deliver the proposed results effectively and efficiently.

## 10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

### Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 1*). The starting date should be after grant signature (normally within 6 months). A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: see section 6 above.

### Milestones and deliverables

Activities must be grouped into work packages which are major sub-divisions of the project (e.g. Project Management and Coordination, Communication and Dissemination, etc.). The coordination and management costs of WP1 should not be higher than 10% of the total cost of the proposal.

For each work package, an objective and lists of tasks/activities, milestones and deliverables must be defined. The deliverables and milestones must be quantifiable and measurable. Their structure should be logical and guided by identifiable outputs with clear indicators.

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The following deliverables will be **mandatory** for all projects:

- Report on the EU Survey on Justice, Rights, and Values.

Beneficiaries will have to ask attendees in events to participate in the EU Survey on Justice, Rights and Values. This survey allows the granting authority to closely monitor training, mutual learning and awareness-raising events. The beneficiaries will receive a weblink to the survey, to be forwarded to the attendees. They will have access to the survey results for their project and can use it for their project evaluation. The granting authority will aggregate the results of all the projects financed under the CERV programme.

#### Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (*maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc*) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5*).

Project budget (requested grant amount): see section 6 above.

The grant will be a lump sum grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount, based on a lump sum or financing not linked to costs. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the estimated project budget and a funding rate of 90%.

#### Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3, art 6 and Annex 2*).

*Budget categories for this call:*

- [Lump sum contributions](#)<sup>35</sup>

*Specific cost eligibility rules for this call:*

- the lump sum amount must be calculated in accordance with the methodology set out in the [lump sum decision](#) and using the detailed budget table provided/calculator provided (if any)
- the lump sum calculation should respect the following conditions:
  - for lump sums based on estimated project budgets: the estimated budget must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6](#))
  - for lump sums based on estimated project budgets: costs for financial support to third parties are not allowed

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<sup>35</sup> [Decision](#) of 30 September 2022 authorising the use of lump sums for actions under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).

- project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for separate project websites are not eligible
- personnel costs:
  - volunteers' unit costs<sup>36</sup> are allowed (without indirect costs)

The details and the breakdown of the 'Other cost' items from headings A.1 and C.3 should be provided in the 'any comments' sheet of the detailed budget table.

### Reporting and payment arrangements


The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22*).


After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **80%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

In addition, you will be expected to submit one or more progress reports not linked to payments.

**Payment of the balance:** At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (see *art 22*).

 Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done.

### Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4*). The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are normally requested from the coordinator, for the consortium. They must be provided during grant preparation, in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

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<sup>36</sup> [Commission Decision](#) of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646)

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement (art 23).

### Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24*).

### Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet point 4.4 and art 22*).

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
  - unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
- or
- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

### Provisions concerning the project implementation

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5)*:

- rights of use on results: Yes

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5)*:

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

### Other specificities

Consortium agreement: Yes

### Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).



For more information, see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

## **11. How to submit an application**

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) **create a user account and register your organisation**

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EULogin account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) **submit the proposal**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Calls for proposals](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners<sup>37</sup>) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- KPI tool containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online, all sections to be completed
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) in proposals

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<sup>37</sup> See section 13 for more information on consortium roles and the roles of coordinator, affiliated entities and associated partners.

When considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised.

Specifically, applicants are required to:

- Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.
- Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations, including those generated by the AI tool. Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.
- Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarizing someone else's work.
- Be respectful of personal data and confidential information by not entering these on AI platforms that are not managed on proprietary servers.
- Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge.

## 12. Help

As far as possible, ***please try to find the answers you need yourself***, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- Topic Q&A on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Call and Topic pages regularly, since we will use them to publish call updates, including an invitation to the info session for applicants (if any) after the opening of the call. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

### Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to one of the following email address:

- [the CERV Contact Point of your country](#) (if established);

Otherwise, you may contact [EC-CERV-CALLS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EC-CERV-CALLS@ec.europa.eu).

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (see also cover page).



## 13. Important

### IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (e.g., congestion, etc) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Call and Topic pages regularly. We will use them to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants accept to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). Subcontracting should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). **Subcontracting** going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any). If affiliated entities participate in your project, please do not forget to provide documents demonstrating their affiliation link to your organisation as part of your application.
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated



- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.
- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (e.g., own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants; projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#), art 6.2.E).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants cannot submit more than one proposal as coordinator under this call. See eligibility conditions.
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.

- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see section 12)
- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the EU Financial Regulation, information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

This includes:

- beneficiary names
- beneficiary addresses
- the purpose for which the grant was awarded
- the maximum amount awarded.

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection — The submission** of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with Regulation [2018/1725](#). It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).