



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

## **Call for proposals**

Call for proposals to national data protection authorities on reaching  
out to stakeholders in data protection legislation  
(CERV-2026-DATA)

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Call: CERV-2026-DATA - Call for proposals to national data protection authorities on reaching out to stakeholders in data protection legislation

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS

Directorate H – Horizontal Affairs  
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## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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## 0. Introduction

This is call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of data protection 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](#))<sup>1</sup>
- the basic act (CERV Regulation [2021/692](#))<sup>2</sup>.

The call is launched in accordance with the 2026-2027 Work Programme<sup>3</sup> and will be managed by the **European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST)**.

The call covers the following **topic**:

### **CERV-2026-DATA - Call for proposals to national data protection authorities on reaching out to stakeholders in data protection legislation**

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)

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024).

<sup>2</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>3</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

- 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 results webpage](#) and the [REC Programme results webpage](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

## **1. Background**

The second report<sup>4</sup> on the application of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR) issued on 25 July 2024 highlights that the GDPR is one of the cornerstones of the EU's approach to the digital transformation and its basic principles underpin all EU policies involving the processing of personal data. It is also underlined in the report that in the coming years, the focus should be on supporting stakeholders' compliance efforts, including in particular small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and other small operators, and that the Commission will continue to provide financial support for activities of data protection authorities that facilitate implementation of GDPR obligations by SMEs. This approach supports the Commission's broader objective to speed up, simplify and improve EU policies and laws, and make rules clearer and easier to understand and faster to implement<sup>5</sup> as well as the objectives of the European Union Data Strategy in easing compliance with the GDPR, in particular for small operators.

In the GDPR Implementation Dialogue<sup>6</sup>, stakeholders called for tailor-made support, such as templates and checklists, especially for smaller operators. Several stakeholders also referred to codes of conduct as a useful compliance tool, but their development and adoption procedure were considered cumbersome.

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

### **CERV-2026-DATA - Call for proposals limited/restricted to national Data Protection Authorities on reaching out to stakeholders in data protection**

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<sup>4</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Second Report on the application of the General Data Protection Regulation COM (2024) 357 final.

<sup>5</sup> A simple and faster Europe: Communication on implementation and simplification. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (2025) 47 final, 11.2.2025; Data Union Strategy: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, COM(2025) 835 final, 19.11.2025.

<sup>6</sup> [Implementation dialogue on the application of the general data protection regulation with Commissioner Michael McGrath - European Commission](#)

## legislation

### Objective

Facilitating compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), small mid-cap enterprises (SMCs) and organisations with a similar number of employees.<sup>7</sup>

### Themes and priorities (scope)

Building on experience gained from the calls for proposals launched in 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2024, and in view of implementing the conclusions of the 2024 report on the application of the GDPR<sup>8</sup>, the Commission's broader implementation and simplification agenda and the Data Union Strategy, actions under this priority should aim to further support activities carried out by national data protection authorities in Member States to facilitate the implementation of GDPR obligations by small and medium-sized enterprises, small mid-caps and organisations with a similar number of employees.

### Activities that can be funded (scope)

Helping national data protection authorities in Member States reach out to businesses and organisations by:

- Supporting activities carried out by national data protection authorities to facilitate the implementation of GDPR obligations by small and medium-sized enterprises, small mid-caps and organisations with a similar number of employees; these activities should in particular include providing practical guidance, templates, or digital tools that can be replicated in other Member States; or
- Supporting activities carried out by national data protection authorities to raise awareness of the opportunities provided by codes of conduct and certifications for facilitating compliance with the GDPR and to encourage their development, in particular transnational codes of conduct and European Data Protection Seals which contribute to the consistent application of the GDPR across the EU/EEA.

Interventions to reach out to businesses and organisations shall take into account a gender-equality perspective<sup>9</sup> in their design and implementation<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> In the context of the GDPR this refers to enterprises and organisations with less than 750 employees based on the Commission proposal COM(2025) 501 final for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) 2016/679, (EU) 2016/1036, (EU) 2016/1037, (EU) 2017/1129, (EU) 2023/1542 and (EU) 2024/573. The proposal is currently under negotiation, and the co-legislators may decide to change this threshold.

<sup>8</sup> COM(2024) 357 final: [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0357](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0357)

<sup>9</sup> Thereby, it shall be ensured that neither women and girls nor men and boys are unintentionally adversely affected or discriminated in project activities, so that activities are gender responsive.

<sup>10</sup> Implementation of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

This involves applying due diligence to gender specific needs and risks, including but not limited to:

- (a) The communication and exchange of information, in particular paying attention to the inclusivity of language<sup>11</sup>.
- (b) The collection, use and presentation of data disaggregated by sex.
- (c) The presentation of information encouraging people of all genders to exercise their data protection rights

Successful projects should ensure easy access to and wide dissemination of their results to all groups of society including minorities, and specifically people with disabilities.

#### *Expected impact*

Facilitating compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), small mid-cap enterprises (SMCs) and organisations with a similar number of employees.

- Improved compliance with GDPR obligations among SMEs, SMCs and organisations with a similar number of employees;
- Increased awareness of data protection rules among SMEs, SMCs and organisations with a similar number of employees;
- Improved exchange and uptake of good practices among national data protection authorities.

The applicants are encouraged to develop new innovative approaches or, alternatively, build on the previous projects without duplicating them. For more information on successful projects funded under the previous Data Protection calls, please check the projects financed previously under [REC 2014-2020](#) and the most recent ones funded under the CERV 2021-2022 and 2023-2025 programmes: [EU funding supporting the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) - European Commission](#).

### **3. Available budget**

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 2.300.000**.

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**

<b>Timetable and deadlines (indicative)</b>	
Call opening:	26 February 2026
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<b><u>28 May 2026 – 17:00:00 CET</u></b> <b><u>(Brussels)</u></b>
Evaluation:	June - August 2026
Information on evaluation results:	September 2026
GA signature:	September – November 2026

<sup>11</sup> As the general public should in principle include all groups in the society, in all their diversity.

## 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 [Calls for proposals](#) 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, assembled and re-uploaded*)
- Part C (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** (*templates to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
  - detailed budget table (*template available in portal submission system; to be re-uploaded filled out in the format .xlsx*) **(mandatory)**
  - CVs (standard) of core project team **(mandatory)**
  - activity reports of last year: not applicable
  - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*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*) **(mandatory)**
  - 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)

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>12</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

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<sup>12</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/horizon/lump-sum/guidance>

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 all 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** (please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded).

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:

1. Lead applicants (coordinators) must be national Data Protection Authorities within the meaning of Article 51 of Regulation (EU) 2016/679, with only one application per Member State being accepted;
2. Co-applicants (if any) must be
  - legal entities (public or private bodies)
  - established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
    - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (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.

Other eligibility conditions:

- 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*

**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>13</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.

**Associations and interest groupings** — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'<sup>14</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 for participation in the programme (*see list of participating countries above*) may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature and if the association covers the call (i.e. is retroactive and covers both the part of the programme and the year when the call was launched).

**EU restrictive measures** — Special rules apply for 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). 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).

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<sup>13</sup> [See Article 200\(2\)\(c\) EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.](#)

<sup>14</sup> For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

**EU conditionality measures** — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092<sup>15</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

Applications by single applicants are allowed (single beneficiaries)

### 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. Activities must be grouped into work packages (e.g., Project Management and Coordination; Communication and Dissemination, etc.), which are major sub-divisions of the project.

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>16</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 should normally 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 75 000 and higher than EUR 250 000**.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

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<sup>15</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).

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, [Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy](#).

### 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 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/minors 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 all beneficiaries, except:

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

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
- applicants' activity reports of last year
- 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>17</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)

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<sup>17</sup> See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

- 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>18</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 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 Regulation No [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>19</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>20</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).

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<sup>18</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.

<sup>19</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>20</sup> See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

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 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 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 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 are 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:

### 1. **Relevance** (40 points):

- 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

**2. Quality (40 points):**

- 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 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)

**3. Impact (20 points):**

- 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

<b>Award criteria</b>	<b>Minimum pass score</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>
Relevance	25	40
Quality – Project design and implementation	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.

**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 (maximum 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>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> [Decision of 30/09/2022 authorising the use of lump sums for actions under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme \(2021-2027\)](#).

*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
- 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
  - 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>22</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 pre-financing). The pre-financing 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.

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<sup>22</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)

### 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).

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 EU Login 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) 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
- Part C (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

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 after the opening of the call (if any). (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

Call: CERV-2026-DATA - Call for proposals to national data protection authorities on reaching out to stakeholders in data protection legislation

### *Contact*

For help related to this call you may contact the [CERV Contact Point](#) of your country, if established.

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: [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 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).
- **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 may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

Organisations may participate in several proposals.

BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).

- **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 the applicable legal framework. 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](#).