



**Contracting Authority: European Commission**

**Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy Montenegro  
2025**

**Guidelines for grant applicants**

Budget line(s): 14.020211

**Reference:**

**EuropeAid/185546/DD/ACT/ME**

**Deadline for submission<sup>1</sup> of full application:**

**08/05/2026 at 16:00 (Brussels date and time)**

(in order to convert to local time click [here](#)<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> Online submission via PROSPECT is mandatory for this call for proposals (see section 2.2.2). In PROSPECT all dates and times are expressed in Brussels time. Applicants should note that the IT support is open Monday to Friday from 08:30 to 18:30 Brussels time (except during European Commission public holidays in Belgium as published in the Official Journal). Applicants should take note of the weekly maintenance hours mentioned in the PROSPECT user manual.

<sup>2</sup> An example of a time converter tool available: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>.

# NOTICE

This is an open call for proposals, where all documents are submitted together: concept note (Annex A.1- Grant application form - Concept note) and full application (Annex A.2 - Grant application form - Full application). In the first instance, only the concept notes will be evaluated. Thereafter, for the lead applicants who have been pre-selected, the full applications will be evaluated. After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected (including those placed on the reserve list). Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority and the signed 'declaration by the lead applicant' sent together with the full application.

## Online submission via PROSPECT

**To apply to this call for proposals, organisations must register in PADOR and submit their application in PROSPECT (see section 2.2.2 of the guidelines).** The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations through a new panel of functionalities such as the on-line submission and the possibility to follow up online the status of their application.

**Preparation:** Information session **26 February 2026 at 14:30**, Europe House, trg Argentina 4, Podgorica and user manuals.

To help applicants familiarise themselves with the system before the online submission, an information session will be organised on **26 February 2026 at 14:30**, Europe House, trg Argentina 4, Podgorica.

Should you be interested in this session, please send an email by 25 February 2026 to [delegation-montenegro-fcs@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:delegation-montenegro-fcs@eeas.europa.eu), indicating: name, surname, nationality and email address of the persons who are going to participate as well as their organisation (max. two participants per organisation). No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

All organisations may find more information regarding PROSPECT in the [user's manual](#) and the [e-learning videos](#). You may also contact our technical support team via the online support form in PROSPECT<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via email: [ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu).

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# 1. THEMATIC PROGRAMME ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY MONTENEGRO 2025

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

The Thematic Programme for Human Rights and Democracy (HR&D) is designed to support civil society to become an effective force for political reform and defence of human rights. It supports the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2025-2027 which identifies five overarching priorities and key actions to ensure that the EU plays a greater role in promoting and defending human rights and democracy throughout its external action: (i) Protecting and empowering individuals (ii) Building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies (iii) Promoting a global system for human rights and democracy (iv) Harnessing the opportunities and addressing challenges of new technologies and (v) Delivering by working together.

The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024<sup>4</sup> (extended until 2027<sup>5</sup>, aligning it with the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027), re-affirms the EU commitment to support human rights and democracy worldwide and identifies priorities and key actions to ensure that the EU plays a greater role in promoting and defending human rights and democracy throughout its external action.

EU Delegations implement their human rights and democracy actions ensuring responsiveness to national contexts. In enlargement countries, including Montenegro, the programme focuses on CSOs' role in supporting reforms linked to the Copenhagen political criteria - democracy, rule of law, and human rights - thus complementing support brought under other instruments, in particular IPA III assistance. This search for complementarity is fully in line with the Council Conclusions on Democracy Support Agenda for Action.

Montenegro 2025 Country Report<sup>6</sup> emphasises that the legislative and institutional framework for fundamental rights is largely in place, and that Montenegro continues to largely meet its international obligations on human rights. However, more effort is needed to fully implement this framework and to ensure access to justice and enforcement of rights in administrative and judicial proceedings, in particular for people in vulnerable situations. Social polarisation continued during the reporting period. The most vulnerable in society (including Roma and Egyptians, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ persons) continued to be subjected to discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes. The 2025 report of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on Montenegro recommends that the authorities promote among politicians and high-ranking government officials the active condemnation of, and counter speech to racist and anti-LGBTI hate speech and take inspiration from ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech and the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 on combating hate speech. ECRI also recommends that the authorities continue and expand high school exchanges in the country with the aim of facilitating encounters and contacts between pupils belonging to different historical ethnic, linguistic or religious communities.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES:

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is to empower CSOs and to support their efforts to promote, advance and defend human rights and democracy in Montenegro.

The **specific objectives** of this call for proposals are twofold: firstly, to support CSOs and human rights defenders working in the area of prevention and fighting against discrimination and secondly, to support CSOs working in the area of protection of social, economic and cultural rights, especially for groups particularly vulnerable to discrimination.

The **priorities** of this call for proposals are: promotion of positive narratives, diversity, multi-culturalism; and reduction of ethnical distance and promotion of employment and social inclusion especially of vulnerable groups.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12848-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9508-2024-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2025\\_en](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2025_en)

Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 1,000,000.00**. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Indicative allocation of funds by lot/geographical distribution:

**Lot 1: Prevention of and fight against discrimination and hate speech: EUR 400 000**

**Lot 2: Protection and promotion of social, economic and cultural rights of vulnerable groups: EUR 600 000**

If the allocation indicated for a specific lot cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to (an)other lot(s).

### **Size of grants**

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

#### **Lot 1:**

- **minimum amount: EUR 380,000**
- **maximum amount: EUR 400,000**

#### **Lot 2:**

- **minimum amount: EUR 550,000**
- **maximum amount: EUR 600,000**

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum percentages of total eligible costs of the action:

- Minimum percentage: 60 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.4)
- Maximum percentage: 95 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.4).

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union or the European Development Fund<sup>7</sup>.

The grant may cover the entire eligible costs of the action if this is deemed essential to carry it out. If that is the case, the lead applicant must justify full financing in Section 2.1 of Annex A.2. The validity of the justification provided will be examined during the evaluation procedure. The absence of any justification may lead to the rejection of the application.

## **2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide (PRAG), which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG> ).<sup>8</sup>

### **2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

- (1) the actors (2.1.1.):

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<sup>7</sup> Where a grant is financed by the European Development Fund, any mention of European Union financing must be understood as referring to European Development Fund financing.

<sup>8</sup> Note that a lead applicant (i.e. a coordinator) whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission and who is awarded a grant will not sign the standard grant contract published with these guidelines but a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. All references in these guidelines and other documents related to this call to the standard grant contract shall in this case be understood as referring to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement template.

- The ‘**lead applicant**’, i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
  - if any, its **co-applicant(s)** (where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as ‘applicant(s)’);
  - and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant and/or to a co-applicant(s);
- (2) the actions (2.1.3.):
- actions for which a grant may be awarded;
- (3) the eligible costs or results/conditions (2.1.4.):
- where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs (totally or partially): the eligible costs, the types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant.
  - where the grant takes the form of financing not linked to costs (totally or partially): the eligibility conditions for the results/conditions.

### 2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))

#### Lead applicant

In order to be eligible for a grant, the lead applicant must:

- be a legal person **and**
- be non-profit-making **and**
- be a non-governmental organisation<sup>9</sup> **and**
- be established in Montenegro<sup>10</sup> or a Member State of the European Union<sup>11</sup>, or any country, as all are eligible for participation in contracts financed under this Instrument, without prejudice to the limitations inherent in the nature and objectives of the action<sup>12</sup> **and**
- be registered at least 24 months prior to the deadline for submission of project proposals.
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary **and**
- not being in any of the situations listed in Section 2.4. of the practical guide **and**
- in case the lead applicant is not established in Montenegro, it must act with at least one co-applicant that is established in Montenegro.

**The lead applicant must act with co-applicant(s) as specified hereafter.**

<sup>9</sup> For the avoidance of doubt, non-governmental organisation means a voluntary, independent from government, non-profit organisation, which is not a political party or a trade union, (Article 2(48) FR).

<sup>10</sup> Registered under at least one of the following laws: Law on Non-governmental Organisations (Official Gazette of Montenegro 27/99, 09, 30/02, 39/11, 37/17), Labour Law (OG of Montenegro 43/03, 79/04, 49/08, 26/08, 88/09, 26/10, 59/11), Law on Representation of Trade Unions (OG of Montenegro 26/2010), the Bylaw on the representation of employers' organisations (OG of Montenegro, 34/05), the Law on the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro (OG of Montenegro, 001/18), Law on Red Cross of Montenegro (OG of Montenegro, 28/06).

<sup>11</sup> To be determined on the basis of the organisation’s statutes that should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ has been concluded.

<sup>12</sup> Pursuant to Regulation (EU) No.2021/947 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL – Article 28 *"Without prejudice to the limitations inherent to the nature and objectives of the action, participation in procurement, grant and prize award procedures for actions financed under the Human Rights and Democracy thematic programme and the Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention thematic programme as well as rapid response actions, shall be open without limitations."*

The lead applicant may act individually or with co-applicant(s).

If awarded the grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in Annex G (special conditions). The coordinator is the sole interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

### **Co-applicant(s)**

Co-applicants participate in designing and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant.

Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself.

Co-applicants must sign the mandate in Annex A.2 Section 5.

If awarded the grant contract, the co-applicant(s) (if any) will become beneficiary(ies) in the action (together with the coordinator).

### **Affiliated entities**

The lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) may act with affiliated entity(ies).

Only the following entities may be considered as affiliated entities to the lead applicant and/or to co-applicant(s):

Only entities having a structural link with the applicants (i.e. the lead applicant or a co-applicant), in particular a legal or capital link.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

- (i) Control, as defined in Directive 2013/34/EU on the annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements and related reports of certain types of undertakings:

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

- Entities directly or indirectly controlled by the applicant (daughter companies or first-tier subsidiaries). They may also be entities controlled by an entity controlled by the applicant (granddaughter companies or second-tier subsidiaries) and the same applies to further tiers of control;
- Entities directly or indirectly controlling the applicant (parent companies). Likewise, they may be entities controlling an entity controlling the applicant;
- Entities under the same direct or indirect control as the applicant (sister companies).

- (ii) Membership, i.e. the applicant is legally defined as a e.g. network, federation, association in which the proposed affiliated entities also participate or the applicant participates in the same entity (e.g. network, federation, association,...) as the proposed affiliated entities.

The structural link shall as a general rule be neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation. This means that the link would exist independently of the award of the grant; it should exist before the call for proposals and remain valid after the end of the action.

By way of exception, an entity may be considered as affiliated to an applicant even if it has a structural link specifically established for the sole purpose of the implementation of the action in the case of so-called 'sole applicants' or 'sole beneficiaries'. A sole applicant or a sole beneficiary is a legal entity formed by several entities (a group of entities) which together comply with the criteria for being awarded the grant. For example, an association is formed by its members.

### What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

- Entities that have entered into a (procurement) contract or subcontract with an applicant, act as concessionaires or delegates for public services for an applicant,
- Entities that receive financial support from the applicant,

- Entities that cooperate on a regular basis with an applicant on the basis of a memorandum of understanding or share some assets,
- Entities that have signed a consortium agreement under the grant contract (unless this consortium agreement leads to the creation of a ‘sole applicant’ as described above).

#### How to verify the existence of the required link with an applicant?

The affiliation resulting from control may in particular be proved on the basis of the consolidated accounts of the group of entities the applicant and its proposed affiliates belong to.

The affiliation resulting from membership may in particular be proved on the basis of the statutes or equivalent act establishing the entity (network, federation, association) which the applicant constitutes or in which the applicant participates.

If the applicants are awarded a grant contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become beneficiary(ies) of the action and signatory(ies) of the grant contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the implementation of the action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for implementation contracts and financial support to third parties and subcontractors) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the beneficiary(ies) under the grant contract.

Affiliated entity(ies) must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as the lead applicant and the co-applicant(s). They must sign the affiliated entity(ies) statement in Annex A.2 Section 5.

### **2.1.2. Associates, contractors, recipients of financial support**

The following entities are not applicants nor affiliated entities and do not have to sign the ‘mandate for co-applicant(s)’ or ‘affiliated entities’ statement:

- Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Annex A.2 Section 4 — ‘Associates participating in the action’.

- Contractors

The beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are permitted to award contracts (subcontracting or implementation contracts). Beneficiaries, affiliated entity(ies), recipients of financial support or associates cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

- Recipients of financial support

If allowed by the call for proposals, and under the conditions laid herein and in the grant contract, the beneficiaries and their affiliated are permitted to provide financial support to other third parties. These third parties are neither beneficiaries, affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

Each actor should only participate in a single role in an action. This is to avoid any potential conflicts of interest and ensure clear allocation of rights and obligations as well as certainty on cost eligibility.

### **2.1.3. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made**

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

#### **Duration**

The initial planned duration of an action **may not be lower than 36 months nor exceed 40 months.**

#### **Sectors or themes**

Actions must address the objectives and priorities described in section 1.2 of the Guidelines.

#### **Location**

Actions must take place in Montenegro.

## **Types of action (only indicative):**

### **Lot 1: Prevention of and fight against discrimination and hate speech:**

- Actions supporting activism, advocacy, education, awareness raising and campaigning in the area of prevention and combating discrimination and hate speech, especially against vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, Roma, LGBTIQ, etc
- Actions aimed at reducing ethnical distance, promoting positive narratives in the society, etc.
- Actions supporting networking, cooperation, including structured dialogue, among CSOs, media, state institutions and private businesses
- Actions promoting the provision of and access to services (social, psychological, etc.) relevant for the victims of discrimination and hate speech, especially vulnerable groups as mentioned above
- Legal aid and offering advice or support to victims of discrimination and hate speech, including online
- Capacity-building of CSOs and relevant actors, such as training and networking activities to strengthen Civil Society engagement in fighting discrimination and hate speech aligned with European standards and latest Criminal Code, Anti-discrimination Law of Montenegro, etc.
- Artistic and cultural expression projects celebrating diversity and promoting human rights
- Actions facilitating structured cooperation between CSOs and relevant state institutions to enhance safeguards against discrimination and hate speech, including the online sphere
- Educational activities promoting the respect of diversity, intercultural learning and the values of solidarity and human rights

### **Lot 2: Protection and promotion of social, economic and cultural rights of vulnerable groups:**

- Supporting access to public services (employment, health, education, etc.) for vulnerable, marginalised, exposed or discriminated groups (ex. Persons with disabilities, Roma, LGBTIQ, minorities)
- Fostering development of competences and skills through non formal learning; digital literacy, vocational education, critical thinking, in cooperation and partnership with the National Employment Agency and its local branch offices
- Creating partnerships between local/regional public institutions and civil society organisations on development of tailor-made employment measures for disadvantaged groups
- Creating opportunities for self-employment of vulnerable, marginalised, exposed or discriminated groups
- Supporting national and local institutions and actors in protecting and promoting social, economic and cultural rights of the most vulnerable, marginalised, exposed or discriminated groups
- Enhancing the inclusion into all aspects of societal life of people belonging to minorities and/or people being in marginalised situations, such as people belonging to ethnic or sexual minorities; people marginalised by poverty and/or lacking educational opportunities; people being in vulnerable situations; victims of social discrimination; migrants and refugees

The following types of action are ineligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions and measures that may result in violation of human rights in partner countries or causing significant adverse effects on the environment or the climate<sup>13</sup>;
- infrastructure projects or projects essentially focused on the purchase of equipment;

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<sup>13</sup> Article 29 NDICI.

- purchase and/or renovation of buildings or offices;
- activities undertaken before signature of the contract;
- actions aimed at profit making activities;
- actions related to charitable donations;
- actions already funded by other Community programmes;
- actions discriminating against individuals or groups of people on grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack of them, or their ethnical origin;
- actions supporting individual political parties;
- actions aimed at supporting political activities or political parties.

**Types of activity (only indicative):**

- Monitoring the implementation of central and local public policies, strategies, action plans and indicators;
- Capacity building of civil society organisations and other stakeholders active in the human rights/democracy field and of human rights defenders to monitor policies;
- Activities to mobilise and empower vulnerable groups;
- Strengthening of existing civil society platforms, networks or coalitions, campaigning and cooperation on issues linked to the call;
- Exchange of information, know-how and experience;
- Organisation of training events and implementation of training programmes;
- Organisation of discussion fora to improve dialogue and networking between civil society and decision makers on the issues and priorities of this call;
- Advocacy, lobbying and development of strategies by civil society organisations to promote relevant legal reform, influence policy-making, or to counter restrictions imposed by state on CSOs and other non-state actors;
- Pilot activities to test and document the result of new approaches for enhanced access to or innovation of services and other actions mentioned above for the groups targeted by this call
- Legal advice/assistance
- Facilitating dialogue processes and mediation activities (such as inter-community dialogues);
- Documenting and reporting on cases of human rights violations;
- Monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the international human rights instruments that the country has ratified and human rights policy implementation at central and local level, including advocacy;
- Supporting the collection of appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable governments to formulate and implement policies;
- Awareness-raising and communication campaigns to inform on specific democracy/human rights issues;
- Promoting inclusive and strategic partnerships, networking and cooperation with CSOs and other relevant stakeholders or among CSOs in the region and the EU;
- Promoting greater contact and cooperation between civic and political actors, including fostering of structured dialogue mechanisms;
- Awareness-raising on the topics of the call
- Visibility activities: all applicants should include a communication and visibility strategic plan both in the Full Application and the budget in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Actions. The applicants may plan some of the visibility activities in the following non-exhaustive list: publishing and disseminating promotional material, distributing public

announcements on project activities and results, organise press conferences and public events, promote concrete project activities in print and electronic media through interviews/reportages/articles/clips, etc.

## **Financial support to third parties**

### **All lots:**

Applicants must propose financial support to third parties (FSTP) in order to help achieve the objectives of the action.

**Lot 1:** Minimum **EUR 200,000** should be dedicated to FSTP;

**Lot 2:** Minimum **EUR 300,000** should be dedicated to FSTP.

The maximum amount of financial support per third party is EUR 30 000 except where achieving the objectives of the actions would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult, in which case this threshold can be exceeded. A threshold below EUR 30 000 can be set if appropriate.

Please note that all provisions under 2.1.3 and the entries sectors and themes, location, types of actions, types of activities, ineligible actions and number of applications and grants per applicant **must also be applied to the financial support to third parties**. The only exception to this provision will be the duration of the implementation of actions financed under support to third parties. Activities should fall within the span of the contract implementation.

**In compliance with the present guidelines and notably of any conditions or restrictions in this Section, the lead applicant should define mandatorily in Section 2.1.1 of the grant application form:**

- (i) the overall objectives, the specific objective(s) and the outputs<sup>[1]</sup> (i.e. the results) to be achieved with the financial support
- (ii) the different types of activities eligible for financial support, on the basis of a fixed list
- (iii) the types of persons or categories of persons which may receive financial support
- (iv) the criteria for selecting these entities and giving the financial support
- (v) the criteria for determining the exact amount of financial support for each third entity, and
- (vi) the maximum amount which may be given.

In all events, the mandatory conditions set above for giving financial support (points (i) to (vi)) have to be strictly defined in the grant contract as to avoid any exercise of discretion.

Recipients of financial support cannot be designated in the lists of EU restrictive measures ([See section 2.4 of the PRAG](#)).

The persons or categories of persons as third parties eligible for financial support are the following:

- be legal persons or an entity without legal personality<sup>14</sup> **and**
- be non-profit making **and**

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<sup>[1]</sup> As per OECD DAC definition, the term ‘results’ includes: ‘impact’ (overall objective), ‘outcome(s)’ (specific objective(s) and ‘output(s)’.

<sup>14</sup> Grant applications may be eligible if submitted by entities which do not have legal personality under the applicable national law, on the condition that the representatives of that applicant can prove that they have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on behalf of the applicant, and that they offer financial and operational guarantees equivalent to those provided by legal persons.

- be civil society organisations<sup>15</sup> **and**
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action

**The description of the action(s) must propose a clear programme of capacity building and mentoring to recipients of FSTP. This should cover both project management and the substance of the activities carried out under the FSTP. It is mandatory to ensure support also to the consolidation and sharing of experiences made with the FSTP, i.e. including communication.**

Financial support to third parties should preferably be done by Calls for proposals remaining open for applications by third parties (organisations or initiatives) throughout the period of implementation of the project subject to a deadline allowing the implementation of the initiatives needing financial support.

When launching calls for proposals for the award of financial support to third parties, beneficiaries may use their own procedures provided these procedures comply with the principles of proportionality, sound financial management, equal treatment and non-discrimination, ensure transparency with adequate publication of calls for proposals and prevent conflict of interests throughout the entire award procedure.

**Financial support to third parties should be preferably provided to entities operating outside of the capital Podgorica with equal distribution of the support across the country.**

**Beneficiaries, which have signed contract under this call for proposals are not eligible applicants under the financial support to third parties.**

**It is not allowed to request co-financing from third parties. For the financial support to third parties, 100% of financing must be provided.**

**Financial Support to Third Parties<sup>16</sup>** is a financial mechanism whereby the EU provides funding to one organisation as a grant applicant, which, in turn, re-grants funding to a number of smaller CSOs, grassroots, or community-based organisations, even individuals.

- Before awarding the grant, the contracting authority will verify that the grant beneficiary offers appropriate guarantees as regards the recovery of amounts due to the European Commission. This is because the grant beneficiaries remain financially responsible vis-à-vis the contracting authority for the correct use of the financial support.
- **The third parties receiving financial support from the beneficiaries are not subject to the same eligibility criteria as those applicable to beneficiaries and affiliated entities under the call for proposals.**
- FSTP should be conceived in such a way as to be an **efficient and easy tool** for the achievement of the purpose of the action.

The implementing partners have certain flexibility to define **what type of supporting documents the FSTP beneficiaries need to submit, such as receipts or reports**. The implementing partners are allowed to propose to the Contracting Authority which documents are considered essential, as well as who will keep them. Auditors will turn solely to the implementing partner for proof and documentation, not to the FSTP beneficiary.

Output-based reporting is allowed by the EU to the extent that there is no need for proof of expenses but rather for documents proving that the activity has taken place in accordance with what was required, and the related outputs were produced.

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<sup>15</sup> The broadest possible understanding about civil society organisations is applied under this call for proposals, as defined in 1999 by the European Economic and Social Committee (CES/1999/851) and further detailed by both the EESC (CES/1999/851, CES/2000/81) and the EC (com/2002/0704.final, COM/2005/0290.final).

<sup>16</sup> Article 207 of the Financial Regulation

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&from=EN>

Chapter 6.9.2 of the PRAG8, Chapter 19.2.10.3 in the (previously DEVCO, now INTPA) Companion9, and Art. 10.5-10.9 of the General Conditions (Annex II of the grant contract10).

## Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to ensure the visibility of the European Union as the funder or co-funder of the action, through the correct and prominent display of the EU emblem and relevant funding statement. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission.

All measures and activities relating to visibility and, if applicable, communication, must comply with the latest Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU-funded external action, laid down and published by the European Commission [Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions | International Partnerships \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/communication/visibility-requirements).

Derogation from contractual visibility obligations is permitted in exceptional situations, which may be required in the framework of this action due to security issues for the staff and beneficiaries, local political sensitivities, when this is in the interest of the beneficiary or the contracting authority. In such cases, visibility tools, products, and channels to be used in promoting a given action will be determined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation and agreement with the EU prior to limiting EU visibility. Requests for derogation from contractual visibility obligations should be included in Annex A.2 – Full application form and negotiated as part of the Special Conditions of the contract.

### Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

The lead applicant **may not** submit more than one application per lot under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant **may not** be awarded more than one grant under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in another application of another lot at the same time.

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in maximum 2 applications under this call for proposals (maximum one per lot).

A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be awarded maximum 2 grants under this call for proposals.

### Form of the grant

The grants awarded under this call for proposals take the following form(s):

- Reimbursement of eligible costs that may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:
  - (i) actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);
  - (ii) one or more simplified cost options (see Section 2.1.4).

### 2.1.4. Eligibility of costs and eligibility of results/conditions

#### Reimbursement of costs

Where the grant takes the form of reimbursement of costs (entirely or partially), only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for ‘eligible costs’.

Eligible costs can be reimbursed as actual costs<sup>17</sup>

#### Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines).

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<sup>17</sup> Please note that where volunteer costs are accepted as co-financing, it shall be determined on the basis of the unit cost per volunteer per day as defined and authorised by the European Commission at the following address: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/unit-cost-decision>.

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant contract do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the contracting authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant or the percentage of EU co-financing as a result of these corrections.

It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

#### Contingency reserve

The budget may include a contingency reserve not exceeding 5% of the estimated direct eligible costs. It can only be used with the **prior written authorisation** of the contracting authority.

#### Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed 7% of the estimated total eligible direct costs (except volunteer costs and project office costs) (in case of actions comprising also financing not linked to costs, to be calculated on the cost-based component). Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the special conditions of the grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

If any of the applicants or affiliated entity(ies) is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU, it may not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the action.

#### Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to beneficiaries or affiliated entities free of charge by a third party. As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for beneficiaries or affiliated entities, they are not eligible costs (except for personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or an operating grant if so authorised).

Contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing.

However, if the description of the action as proposed includes contributions in kind, the contributions have to be made.

Contributions involving real estate must be excluded from the calculation of the amount of co-financing. In-kind contributions must comply with national tax and social security rules.

If co-financing in kind is proposed, it must be included in Annex B (Worksheet 3) to the guidelines for applicants on the expected sources of funding for the action. The same amount must be indicated in the budget (worksheet 1).

Other co-financing shall be based on estimates provided by the applicant.

#### Ineligible costs

Costs that do not comply with the conditions laid down in the contract are not eligible. The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant;
- purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred in accordance with Article 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;
- currency exchange losses;
- in kind contributions (except for volunteers' work);
- bonuses included in costs of staff;

- negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
- credit to third parties;
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations.

### **2.1.5. Ethics and values**

#### **Absence of conflict of interest**

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in exclusion decisions for other award procedures and/or financial penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

#### **Respect for environmental legislation and core labour standards**

Applicants who are awarded a grant must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

#### **Respect of EU values**

Applicants who are awarded a grant must commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities.

#### **Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment:**

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

Successful applicants, (and affiliated entities) other than (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies shall assess their internal policy against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) through a self-evaluation questionnaire (Annex L). For grants of EUR 60 000 or less no self-evaluation is required. Such self-evaluation questionnaire is not part of the evaluation of the application by the contracting authority, but is an administrative requirement. See section 6.2.10. of the practical guide.

#### **Anti-corruption and anti-bribery**

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, 'corrupt practices' are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

#### **Unusual commercial expenses**

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

### **Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud**

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to substantial breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If substantial breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

## **2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW**

To apply for this call for proposals, lead applicants need to:

### **I. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action.**

Lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities, other than natural persons, must register in PADOR<sup>18</sup> and the lead applicants must make sure that their PADOR profile is up to date.

PADOR is an on-line database in which organisations register and update information concerning their entity. Organisations registered in PADOR get a unique ID (EuropeAid ID), which they must mention in their application.

PADOR is accessible via the website: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/pador>.

Please note that the registration of this data in **PADOR is obligatory** for this call for proposals.

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, or for security and confidentiality concerns, lead applicants, co-applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) must complete the 'PADOR registration form'<sup>19</sup> attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent **together with the application**, by the submission deadline (see Section 2.2.2.).

The European Commission external action DGs (DG INTPA, DG NEAR, FPI) are migrating the management of their calls and contracts to an online portal based on a register of organisations participating in EU calls for proposals. This online register will apply the "once only" principle: data related to an organisation needs to be submitted only once. This portal will be used as a communication platform for the management of the contract(s). Since you are in the process of applying for a call for proposals financed by DG INTPA, DG NEAR or FPI, it is mandatory to register now in the Commission's Participant register. This Participant Register will act as an entry point to the future call and contract management portal. By registering you will obtain a Participant Identification Code (PIC, 9-digit number) which will act as your unique identifier. Registration is free of charge. Not registering your organisation might create technical difficulties with the future data migration.

To apply for this call for proposal, it is mandatory for the lead and co-applicants to register in the **Participant Register**. In order to register your organisation, please follow this link: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register>.

### **II. Provide information about the action in the documents listed under section 2.2.2. (Where and how to send applications).**

Please note that online submission via **PROSPECT is obligatory** for this call.

**It is strongly recommended to register in PADOR well in advance and not to wait until the last minute before the deadline to submit your application in PROSPECT.**

Before starting using PADOR and PROSPECT, please read the user guides available on the website. All technical questions related to the use of these systems should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at [ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu) via the online support form in PROSPECT.

<sup>18</sup> Natural persons who apply for a grant (if so allowed in the guidelines) do not have to register in PADOR. In this case, the information included in PROSPECT and in the concept note is sufficient.

<sup>19</sup> Which corresponds to Annex F – PADOR Off-line form (practical guide, Annex e13).

### 2.2.1. Application forms

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions on the concept note and the full applications in the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

Applicants must apply in English.

Please complete the application form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

#### **WARNING**

The title of your proposal will become, if selected, the subject matter of the grant contract that will be signed with your organisation.

On the [Europa website](#), the field 'Public subject', using the title of the selected proposal, is used for publication in the Financial Transparency System (FTS) of all EU grants. This field, being intended for the general public, should provide general and clear information on the purpose of the expenditure.

We therefore recommend to define the subject matter of your proposal along the following indications.

An appropriate subject:

- refers to the content of the project or its objective;
- does not repeat information available in other fields such as the recipient's name, the programme, the year;
- is preferably written in English;
- may contain acronyms if relevant for the citizens;
- may contain the reference to the project or programme.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the instructions on the concept note or any major inconsistency in the application e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Please note that only the grant application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

**Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Annexes A.1 and A.2, Instructions). If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, or for confidentiality and security concerns, the lead applicant has to submit with the application the completed PADOR registration form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each co-applicant (if any) and each affiliated entity (if any).**

In addition, the following documents shall be submitted by the application deadline together with the application form:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity. Where the contracting authority has recognised the lead applicant's, or the co-applicant(s)'s, or their affiliated entity(ies)'s eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it shall submit instead, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred in the meantime. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have been subject of a pillar assessment.
2. The declaration on honour (Annex H to these guidelines) signed by the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.4.2 of the practical guide) where the amount of the grant exceeds EUR 15 000.

In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted<sup>20</sup>:

- a. For action grants exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating grants exceeding EUR 100 000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the lead applicant accounts for up to the last 3 available financial years.

In all other cases, the lead applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 available financial years. This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by an applicant to the contracting authority in any one financial year.

The external audit report as well as the self-declaration certifying the validity of the accounts are not required from the co-applicant(s) or affiliated entities (if any).

- b. A copy of the lead applicant's latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed). A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) (if any) nor from affiliated entity(ies) (if any).

These documents must be supplied in the form of originals (blue ink signature or by applying a qualified electronic signature (QES)<sup>21</sup>), photocopies or scanned versions of blue-ink originals (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates). Where photocopies or scanned copies are provided, originals shall be kept on file for controls in accordance with the record keeping obligations laid down in Section 2.5.5. of the practical guide.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union or in the language of the country where the action is implemented, a translation into English of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, must be submitted for the purpose of analysing the application.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than English, it is strongly recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, into English.

Applicants have to take into consideration the time necessary to obtain official documents from national competent authorities and to translate such documents in the authorised languages while registering their data in PADOR.

If the above-mentioned supporting documents are not provided by the deadline for the submission of the application form, the application may be rejected.

No additional annexes should be sent.

### 2.2.2. Where and how to send applications

Applications **must be submitted online** via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT user manual.

Upon submission of the application online, the lead applicant will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in its PROSPECT profile.

The other supporting documents, except the declaration on honour on exclusion criteria, shall be uploaded in PADOR<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> No supporting documents will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000, or the following categories of lead applicants: (i) natural persons in receipt of education support (ii) natural persons most in need, such as unemployed and refugees, and in receipt of direct support (iii) public bodies, including Member State organisations (iv) international organisations.

<sup>21</sup> Please note that only the QES within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 (eIDAS Regulation) will be accepted. Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC.

<sup>22</sup> See footnote **Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.**

### 2.2.3. Deadline for submission of applications

The deadline for the submission of applications is **08/05/2026 at 16:00** (Brussels date and time). In order to convert this deadline to local time you can use any online time converter tool that takes into account time zones and winter/summer time changes (example available [here](#))<sup>23</sup>.

**Lead applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their applications**, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The contacting authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such aforementioned difficulties.

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

### 2.2.4. Further information about applications

An information session on this call for proposals will be held on **26 February 2026 at 14:30** in Europe House, trg Argentina 4, Podgorica, Montenegro.

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of applications to the below address(es), indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: [delegation-montenegro-procedures@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:delegation-montenegro-procedures@eeas.europa.eu)

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the submission of applications.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure will be published on the website where the call was published: website DG International Partnerships [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr) and/or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>. It is therefore advisable to consult the above-mentioned website(s) regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at [ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu](mailto:ec-external-relations-application-support@ec.europa.eu) **mailto:via the online support form in PROSPECT**: please note that the working languages of the IT support are English, French and Spanish. Therefore, users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

Please note that the contracting authority may decide to cancel the call for proposals procedure at any stage according to the conditions set out in Section 6.5.9 of the practical guide.

## 2.3. EVALUATION

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

### 2.3.1. STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Annex A.2, Instructions. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is

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<sup>23</sup> For example: <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html>.

missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The concept notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note, which can be found in Annex A.1.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

### Evaluation Grid

Section	Maximum Score
<b>1. Relevance of the action</b>	<b>20</b>
1.1. Consistency with the objectives of the call: How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5
1.2. Relevance to the country/region/sector needs: How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5
1.3. Target groups and final beneficiaries: How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the target groups and final beneficiaries? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined? Does the proposal address them appropriately?	5
1.4. Added value elements: Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)? [and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the guidelines for applicants]	5
<b>2. Design of the action</b>	<b>30</b>
2.1. Intervention logic. Does the proposal indicate the expected results (outputs/outcomes/impacts) to be achieved by the action? Does the design of the proposed action identify explicitly the necessary sequence to achieve the desired objectives beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes and impacts?	5x2**
2.2. Context analysis. Does the design of the action include a robust analysis of the needs to be addressed, including the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? Are those also embedded adequately in the intervention logic?	5
2.3. Risks and assumptions. Is the design based on clear assumptions (the necessary and positive conditions that allow for a successful cause-and-effect relationship between different levels of results)? Does it take into account also risks (the factors that might hinder the achievement of results)?	5
2.4. Indicative Activities. Is the indicative list of activities linked to and consistent with the expected outputs?	5
2.5. Cross-cutting issues: To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth, combating HIV/AIDS (if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)?	5
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>50</b>

\*\* : this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

Once all concept notes have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

Firstly, only the concept notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the number of concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to at least 400% of the available budget for this call for proposals. The amount of requested contributions of each concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot, where relevant.

Lead applicants will receive a letter indicating the reference number of their application and the respective results. This letter will automatically appear online in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

### 2.3.2. STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION

If the applications pass the opening and administrative checks along the instructions of the Step 1, they will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

**The selection criteria** help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s operational capacity and the lead applicant's financial capacity and are used to verify that they:

- have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding (this only applies to lead applicants);
- have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This applies to applicants and any affiliated entity(ies).

For the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, lead applicants must ensure that the relevant information and documents (i.e. accounts of the latest financial year and external audit report, where applicable) are up to date, either in their PADOR profile or when submitting the requested documents with the PADOR registration form. If the information and documents requested are outdated and do not allow for a proper evaluation of the financial capacity, the application may be rejected.

**The award criteria** help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

#### Scoring:

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

#### Evaluation grid

Section	Maximum Score
<b>1. Financial and operational capacity</b>	<b>20</b>
1.1. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house experience of project management?	5
1.2. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical in-house expertise (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)?	5
1.3. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management in-house capacity (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?	5
1.4. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?	5
<b>2. Relevance of the action</b>	<b>20</b>

2.1. Consistency with the objectives of the call: How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)?	5
2.2. Relevance to the country/region/sector needs: How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5
2.3. Target groups and final beneficiaries: How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the target groups and final beneficiaries? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined? Does the proposal address them appropriately?	5
2.4. Added value elements: Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)? [and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the guidelines for applicants]	5
<b>3. Design of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1. Intervention logic. Does the proposal indicate the expected results (outputs/outcomes/impacts) to be achieved by the action? Does the design of the proposed action identify explicitly the necessary sequence to achieve the desired objectives beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes and impacts? Is the indicative list of activities linked to and consistent with the expected outputs?	5
3.2. Logical Framework Matrix: Is the logical framework provided in Annex C complete? Does each result (output, outcome, impact) include an adequate number of indicators that are sufficient in scope to measure its achievement? Is each indicator RACER (Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy to monitor, Robust)? Does each indicator have a baseline value (with year), target value (with year), and a credible source of data? If baselines and targets are not available, this is to be justified and a study (or other relevant tools) to be foreseen and budgeted in the proposal? In the case of use of FNLC, are the FNLC results and indicators clearly marked?	5
3.3. Context analysis. Does the design of the action include a robust analysis of the needs to be addressed, including the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? Are those also embedded adequately in the intervention logic?	5
<b>4. Implementation approach</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1. Action plan: Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Are types of activities clearly clustered by output in the Activities Matrix? Is the timeline realistic?	5
4.2. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation: Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring and reporting system? Is the system in place adequate to update the values of the indicators included in the Logical Framework Matrix - thus informing regularly on progress towards the achievement of impact, outcomes and outputs? Is there an evaluation planned and budgeted (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)? If relevant, is the role of third party assessor included?	5
4.3. Project management (technical): Do the co-applicant(s) and (if applicable) their affiliated entities have the necessary technical skills to attain the objectives of the action? Are the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s adequately involved in the implementation (e.g. advocacy, research, capacity building, outreach related activities)?	5
<b>5. Sustainability of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
5.1. Long-lasting benefits: Is the action likely to ensure long lasting and transformative benefits to the target groups and the final beneficiaries?	5
5.2. Multiplier effects: Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, cross-fertilisation of experience and knowledge sharing?	5

5.3. Sustainability How likely the effects are to last after the intervention ends?- Financial sustainability: which financial resources are available to fund the continuation of the services provided by the intervention? How long are they likely to be available and from which sources?)- Institutional sustainability: which institutional arrangements allow for maintaining the benefits achieved? Is there any measure in place to ensure local ownership?)- Policy level sustainability (if applicable): is there any expected policy related effect from the action, e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods- Environmental sustainability (if applicable): will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?)- Risk analysis and mitigation measures: will the action be accompanied by a good risk analysis (including physical, environmental, political, economic and social risks) and relevant mitigation measures?	5
<b>6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action</b>	<b>15</b>
6.1. Budget: Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? In the case of entire or partly use of financing not linked to costs, are the results and performance indicators adequately reflected in the budget?	5
6.2. Efficiency: Is the relation between the estimated amounts as per budget and the expected results adequate?	5x2**
<b>Maximum total score</b>	<b>100</b>

\*\* : this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than 12 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the lead applicant applies without co-applicants or affiliated entities the score for point 4.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of co-applicants or affiliated entities is mandatory according to these guidelines for applicants.

#### *Provisional selection*

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list. The contracting authority informs those lead applicants provisionally selected and those placed on the reserve list, that they will be subject to the final eligibility check.

### **2.3.3. STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS AND AFFILIATED ENTITY(IES) AND OTHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.2.1). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected (including those placed on the reserve list) according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals. In this case:

- The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 5 of Annex A.2) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of applicants and the affiliated entity(ies) will be verified according to the criteria set out in Section 2.1.1. including exclusion criteria.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals.

In the eventuality that the evaluation committee is not satisfied with the strength, solidity, and guarantee offered by the structural link between one of the applicants and its affiliated entity, it can require the submission of the missing documents allowing for its conversion into co-applicant. If all the missing documents for co-applicants are submitted, and provided all necessary eligibility criteria are fulfilled, the above-mentioned entity becomes a co-applicant for all purposes. The lead applicant has to submit the application form revised accordingly.

## **2.4. AWARD DECISION**

After verifying the supporting documents (step 3), the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

The contracting authority may decide not to award any grants and cancel the call for proposals without having the applicants any right to compensation.

The award decision shall indicate the successful applicants, the names of the applicants rejected, and a reserve list (if any).

## **2.5. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION**

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the contracting authority's decision concerning their application.

In case of rejection, they will be informed about the reasons for the negative decision. For the avoidance of doubt, please note that for applications rejected for reasons such as non-compliance with the admissibility requirements (for example, if the application was sent after the deadline), with the eligibility (the entity or person is not part of the predefined eligible population of entities or persons), the selection (the entity does not have financial capacity or professional or operational capacity) and the award criteria (the proposal does not comply with the predefined requirements such as quality, cost/efficiency), no prior adversarial procedure is required.

Applicants placed on the reserve list will also be informed. The applicable terms to the reserve list are laid down in Section 6.5. of the practical guide.

The successful applicants shall also be informed, and will be requested to provide some information and documents, including (for grants exceeding EUR 60 000) the self evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H. The lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities other than (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies shall fill in the self-evaluation questionnaire assessing the organisation's internal policy and procedures against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) (Annex L) (see Section 6.2.10 of the practical guide).

This letter will be sent by e-mail and will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the user who submitted the application. Lead applicants who, in exceptional cases (see section 2.2), had to submit their application by post, private courier or hand-delivery will be informed by e-mail or by post if they did not provide any e-mail address. Therefore, please check regularly your PROSPECT profile, taking into account the indicative timetable below. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure.

Successful applicants will also be informed if the first instalment of pre-financing is subject to the validation of a financial guarantee by the contracting authority. In this case, the applicant will be requested to send the guarantee in time to proceed to the payment of the first instalment in accordance with the payment provisions of the grant contract.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See Section 2.12 of the practical guide.

## **2.6. SIGNATURE OF THE GRANT CONTRACT**

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract. Where the coordinator is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed, it will sign a

contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. In this case, references to provisions of the standard grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the grant contract shall be understood as references to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement.

The budget proposed for the action by the successful applicants at the call for proposals stage must be corrected to remove any obvious arithmetical errors or ineligible costs prior to signing the contract. The description of the action is corrected accordingly if need be.

The contracting authority may decide that other clarifications or minor corrections may be made to the description of the action or to the budget in so far as they do not call into question the grant award decision, do not conflict with equal treatment of applicants, and:

- relate to matters clearly identified by the evaluation committee; or
- aim at taking into consideration changes that have occurred since the date of receipt of the proposal.

These amendments cannot lead to an increase in either the amount of the grant or the percentage of the European Union contribution as set in the guidelines of the call for proposals. In this respect, records of the contacts with the applicants must be kept on the file.

In no case the conditions announced in the guidelines can be altered at this stage. Apart from the above-mentioned clarifications and/or corrections, any other alteration of the initial proposal or deviation from the award conditions laid down in the guidelines is strictly prohibited.

**Any other alteration to the successful applicant’s proposal, or negotiation of it, is prohibited.**

## 2.7. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

	DATE	TIME
<b>1. Information meeting (if any)</b>	26/02/2026	14:30
<b>2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority</b>	17/04/2026	-
<b>3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority</b>	27/04/2026	-
<b>4. Deadline for submission of applications</b>	08/05/2026	16:00
<b>5. Information to lead applicants on, administrative checks and concept note evaluation (Step 1)</b>	May/June 2026	-
<b>6. Notification of the contracting authority decision</b>	June/July 2026	-
<b>7. Contract signature</b>	July 2026	-

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site where the call was published: website of DG International Partnerships [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/home_fr) and/or Funding & Tender opportunities (F&T Portal) <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

## 2.8. EARLY DETECTION AND EXCLUSION SYSTEM

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, natural or legal person that assumes unlimited liability for the debts, natural or legal person who is essential for the award or for the implementation of the legal commitment, beneficial owner or any affiliate of the applicant, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form) may be registered

in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm)

### 3. LIST OF ANNEXES

#### DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

Annex A	Grant application form (Word format)
A.1	Concept note
A.2	Full application form
Annex B	Budget (Excel format)
Annex C	Logical framework (Excel format)
Annex D	[Not applicable]
Annex E	[Not applicable]
Annex F	PADOR registration form
Annex H	Declaration on Honour on exclusion criteria
Annex L	Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H

#### DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION<sup>24</sup>

Annex G	Standard grant contract
Annex II	General conditions
Annex IV	Contract award rules
Annex V	Standard request for payment
Annex VI	Model narrative and financial report
Annex VII-A	Model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action
Annex VII-B	Terms of reference for a third party assessment in case of financing not linked to costs
Annex VIII	Model financial guarantee
Annex IX	Standard template for transfer of ownership of assets
Annex I	Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: <a href="https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en">https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en</a>
Annex J	Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.
Annex K	Additional clarifications on financing not linked to costs

#### USEFUL LINKS

PRAG <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>

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<sup>24</sup> These documents should also be published by the contracting authority.

Project Cycle Management Guidelines	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en">https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en</a>
The implementation of grant contracts, A Users' Guide	<a href="https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=48169235">https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=48169235</a>
Financial Toolkit <sup>25</sup>	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en">https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en</a>
Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES)	<a href="https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/how-it-works/annual-lifecycle/implementation/anti-fraud-measures/edes_en#data-protection">https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/how-it-works/annual-lifecycle/implementation/anti-fraud-measures/edes_en#data-protection</a>

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<sup>25</sup> Please note that the toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.