



Single Market Programme (SMP Consumers)

Call for proposals

Action grants to provide financial contributions to ADR Bodies and
RAD Qualified Entities

(SMP-CONS-2026-ADR-RAD)

Version 1.0
24 February 2026



HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	24.02.2026	Initial version	



EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL AND SMEs EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EISMEA)

EISMEA.I – Innovation ecosystems, SMP/Entrepreneurship and Consumers
EISMEA.I.03 –SMP/ Consumers

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of Consumer protection under the Consumer strand of the **Single Market Programme (SMP Consumers)**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation](#)¹)
- The basic act ([SMP Regulation 2021/690](#)²).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2025-2026 SMP Work Programme³ and will be managed by the **European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topic**:

SMP-CONS-2026-ADR-RAD - Call for proposals for action grants to provide financial contributions to ADR Bodies and RAD Qualified Entities.

- **'ADR bodies'** are bodies designated by the EU Member States pursuant to the ADR Directive 2013/11/EU or established in countries with which the EU has signed a Single Market Programme Agreement covering the Consumer pillar and for which the competent national authority confirms in writing the *mutatis mutandis* conformity with the quality criteria set out in the ADR Directive 2013/11/EU.
- **RAD 'Qualified Entities'** are entities designated by the EU Member States pursuant to Article 4 of the Representative Actions Directive (EU) 2020/1828 or entities established in countries with which the EU has signed a Single Market Programme Agreement covering the Consumer pillar and for which the competent national authority confirms in writing the *mutatis mutandis* compliance with Article 4 of the Representative Actions Directive (EU) 2020/1828.

¹ [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).

² [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/690](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme - SMP) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 99/2013, (EU) No 1287/2013, (EU) No 254/2014 and (EU) No 652/2014 (Text with EEA relevance) (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 1–47).

³ Annex 3 to Commission Implementing Decision C(2024) 8194 of 29.11.2024 on the financing of the programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics and the adoption of the work programme for 2025-2027.

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

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

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

You are also strongly encouraged to visit the [Funding & Tenders Portal - Projects and Results](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

The consumer **Alternative Dispute Resolution** (ADR)⁴ and consumer **Representative Actions**⁵ are equally important tools helping European consumers to enforce their rights towards infringing traders.

On 30 December 2025, [Directive \(EU\) 2025/2647](#)⁶ amending Directive 2013/11/EU (ADR Directive) was published in the Official Journal of the EU. The transposition

⁴ [Directive 2013/11/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2013 on alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes and amending Regulation \(EC\) No 2006/2004 and Directive 2009/22/EC \(Directive on consumer ADR\)](#) (europa.eu)

⁵ [Directive 2020/1828 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#), [Representative Actions Directive - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2025/2647/oj/eng>

deadline is 20 March 2028: by that time, the Member States must adopt and publish necessary national measures and notify them to the Commission. Member States shall apply those measures from 20 September 2028. The new legislation simplifies and modernises the out-of-court resolution of disputes between businesses and consumers in the European Union, adapting them to digital markets and further reinforcing EU consumer protection. Previously, the Directive was limited to contractual disputes between EU consumers and EU traders. Now its scope is extended to cover disputes related to pre-contractual obligations, digital content and services, as well as non-monetary contracts. It now also encompasses non-EU traders willing to engage in ADR procedures. The new requirement for traders to reply to ADR inquiries within 20 days will incentivise businesses to engage with consumers in out-of-court resolution procedures. The new ADR contact points established across Member States will further assist consumers in the process of navigating cross-border dispute resolution. The Commission is currently designing a new information website to inform consumers on ADR and other available redress mechanisms. In view of this reform, it is evident that there is a need to:

1. raise consumers' and traders' awareness on ADR systems,
2. invest more in digitalisation to improve communication among parties, case-handling and consistency of ADR outcomes,
3. facilitate the handling of new consumer disputes, cross-border ADR disputes and disputes involving third-country traders when certain conditions are met, and/or bundled ADR disputes,
4. improve access to ADR in view of more effective national ADR infrastructure, cooperation with other consumer protection bodies and safeguards to vulnerable consumers,
5. set up ADR networks.

The Single Market will be stronger if consumers and traders are aware of the advantages, and they trust ADR being a robust out-of-court dispute resolution mechanism to resolve complex consumer disputes. The objective of the present call for proposals is to support the development of the ADR landscape in the EU, to make it fit for the digital markets and cost-effective.

The **Representative Actions for the protection of the collective interests of consumers** have been introduced into the EU legal order by Directive (EU) 2020/1828 adopted in November 2020⁷. The national measures transposing the Directive should have been applied by the Member States as from 25 June 2023. The Directive aims at efficient procedural solutions in mass harm situations where large groups of consumers are concerned by the same or similar illegal practice(s) by traders. It allows qualified entities, such as consumer organisations or public bodies, as designated by the EU Member States, pursuant to Article 4 of the above-mentioned Directive (hereinafter 'qualified entities'), to bring legal actions on behalf of groups of consumers. The representative actions aim at stopping traders' illegal practices and providing consumers with relevant remedies.

However, the representative actions may be a challenge for designated qualified entities. To bring specific actions, they must dispose of relevant resources, expertise, and tools. They must identify mass harm situations, prepare legal and economic analysis of trader's behaviour, identify possible injunctive measures and remedies, quantify consumers' damage, and finally face possibly complex and long litigation on behalf of hundreds, thousands or even millions of consumers concerned. They also need to efficiently communicate with consumers about intended, ongoing and closed actions. In view of the above, the good functioning of representative actions in the EU depends on the qualified entities capacity to exercise their role as foreseen by the

⁷ [Directive - 2020/1828 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

Directive. The objective of the present call for proposals is to support the capacity building of the qualified entities so that they efficiently exercise the role conferred to them by the Representative Actions Directive.⁸

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

SMP-CONS-2026-ADR-RAD - Call for proposals for action grants to provide financial contributions to ADR Bodies and RAD Qualified Entities.

Objectives

The objective of this Call for proposals is to facilitate consumers' access to effective and efficient alternative dispute resolution bodies compliant with Directive 2013/11/EU, as amended by [Directive \(EU\) 2025/2647](#), and to build the capacity of Qualified Entities to efficiently protect consumers' collective interests pursuant to Directive (EU)2020/1828.

It aims to support concrete improvements in the following areas:

- Awareness-raising on ADR and/or representative actions.
- Protection of vulnerable consumers.
- Networking of *Alternative Dispute Resolution entities* and/or *Qualified Entities* at national and EU-wide levels.
- Capacity building, expertise of staff.
- Use of transparent and innovative digital tools, efficient case handling and good governance.

Themes, priorities and activities that can be funded (scope)

A wide range of activities are eligible for funding provided that they can be linked to the above-mentioned objectives and expected impact mentioned below. Such activities may include for instance (**non-exhaustive list**):

- Awareness raising campaigns, communication activities and translations.
- Creating and supporting of networks among ADR entities and/or RAD Qualified Entities.
- Development and/or improvement and/or procurement of case handling tools.
- Accounting tools and services.
- Trainings for staff.
- Study visits to other *ADR entities* or *RAD Qualified Entities*.
- Organisation of seminars to exchange best practices.
- Statistical analysis of consumers' complaints.
- Studies or trainings (including via procurement) on identifying mass harm situations, providing relevant legal and economic analyses in the context of representative actions and quantifying consumers' damage.

Costs to finance specific collective litigation (specific legal actions brought by Qualified Entities pursuant to the Representative Actions Directive) are not eligible under this call for proposals. However, costs to elaborate relevant methodologies for litigation strategies as well as solutions and tools for effective management of mass claims in

⁸ Member States had to transpose the Directive by 25 December 2022. The national transposing measures should have been applied by the Member States as from 25 June 2023.

the context of judicial or administrative legal actions or collective out of court settlements are eligible.

Joint applications by two or several eligible entities are strongly encouraged:

1. joint applications by **two or several ADR entities** that promote cross-border cooperation among these entities are strongly encouraged as highly relevant. Proposals following up on previous successful projects must highlight actions building upon the previous projects in a clear manner.
2. joint applications by **two or several RAD Qualified Entities** from the same or different Member States that promote domestic or cross-border cooperation among RAD Qualified Entities via EC-REACT⁹ to support the effective and coherent application of the Representative Actions Directive. It is strongly advised that applicants try to build such consortia via EC-REACT before submitting the applications.
3. joint applications by **ADR entities and RAD Qualified Entities** that build practical coherence between consumer out of court dispute resolution and representative actions.

Whenever the application foresees cooperation with RAD Qualified Entities, ADR entities or other stakeholders that will not be a party to the Grant agreement nor will claim any costs (e.g. in the role of associated partners), the expression of interest or letters of support, as well as specific engagement plan of all actors involved in the action would be an asset.

The elements that would enhance the quality of applications:

- applications for actions that foresee a **regular, structured and well planned cooperation** from the very start of the action on the objectives of the action, its deliverables, progress and results among entities participating in the proposed action as well as with some or all other RAD Qualified and ADR entities designated across the EU (it is strongly advised to plan such a cooperation via EC-REACT among RAD Qualified Entities. ADR entities may also ask access to EC-REACT specific Workspaces, if it is justified that this collaborative platform may help such cooperation);
- applications for actions which provide for **detailed analyses of needs** for the specific action in view of the EU legislation objectives (including but not limited to clearly demonstrated and described added value compared to the state-of-play).¹⁰ It is strongly encouraged to demonstrate within the applications the alignment with actions funded through ongoing/closed grants by expanding upon their subject matter, specific objectives, and/or

⁹ 'EC-REACT'- [Representative Actions Collaboration Tool \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/representative-actions-collaboration-tool/) - is a secure and restricted electronic platform for information exchange across the EU on the representative actions as set up by [Representative Actions Directive \(EU\) 2020/1828](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2020/1828/oj). The platform is developed, managed and hosted by the European Commission services, pursuant to Article [14\(3\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2020/1828/oj) of the Representative Actions Directive. Only representatives of European Commission services, EU Member States' authorities and public bodies, members of their judiciary and representatives of the designated 'qualified entities' as foreseen by Article 4 of Directive (EU)2020/1828 may be granted access to 'EC-REACT'. On exceptional basis academics, practitioners, experts and organisations participating in EU funded projects may be granted access too. The *Qualified entities* benefit from its secured Workspace therein to cooperate, exchange, and disseminate their best practices and experience as foreseen by Art. 20(4) of the Directive in a fully secured and confidential manner.

¹⁰ For further research please refer to the [Funding & Tender portal](#)

- geographical scope, and demonstrating the coordination of the new action with the entities managing the actions funded through ongoing/closed grants.
- applications for actions which allow for the **reusability of their results** by other entities (such as those that include a detailed plan outlining how the action's results will be made reusable by its beneficiaries, and, in the case of RAD Qualified entities, ideally by facilitating such reuse through EC-REACT).

Applicants who already received funding under previous calls for proposals, including of the Consumer Programme (2018, 2019, 2020 Work Programmes) and the Consumer pillar of the Single Market Programme (2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 Work Programmes), and which plan to apply again under this call for proposals must clearly explain in their proposal how their proposed Action will build on and differ from the Action(s) funded under the previous call(s).

Expected impact

This call for proposals has a **wide scope**. It is expected that results will impact in concrete improvements within the following areas:

- To **raise awareness** among consumers and traders and increase consumer trust in ADR and Representative Actions.
- To support **cooperation** among ADR and/or *RAD Qualified Entities* at national, regional and EU levels.
- To increase **accessibility** of ADR, Representative Actions and *RAD Qualified Entities* to consumers, including in a cross-border context.
- To improve **operational capacity and expertise** of ADR in resolving consumer disputes and *RAD Qualified Entities* in bringing representative actions.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 1 500 000**. This budget might be increased by maximum 20%.

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	24 February 2026
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>21 May 2026 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	May-August 2026
Information on evaluation results:	August 2026
GA signature:	September – November 2026

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*)
- **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** (*templates to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded*):
 - detailed budget table (*mandatory excel template available in the Submission System*)
 - proof of designation as RAD Qualified Entity, if applicable.

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

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 70 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

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

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- and*
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Single Market 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](#))

and be

- (a) **on the date of the submission of the proposal, an *Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) entity notified to the European Commission*** pursuant to Article 20(2) of [Directive 2013/11/EU on consumer ADR](#), as amended by [Directive \(EU\) 2025/2647](#). Applicants are advised to verify their status by consulting the public list of ADR entities published [here](#).

Or be,

- (b) **on the date of the submission of the proposal, a *RAD Qualified Entity designated by the EU Member State in advance to specific representative actions pursuant to Article 4 of Representative Actions Directive (EU)2020/1828***. Applicants must present the proof of their designation as RAD Qualified Entity by presenting a confirmation of designation issued by the competent national authority or public body pursuant to the national legislation transposing Directive (EU) 2020/1828 in the country of their designation or by indicating their presence at the [EU list of Qualified Entities designated for cross-border representative actions](#) as foreseen by Article 5(1) of Directive (EU) 2020/1828 and published on the official website by the European Commission,

Or be,

- (c) bodies established in countries associated to the Single Market Programme, covering the Consumer pillar and for which the competent national authority confirms in writing the *mutatis mutandis* conformity with the quality criteria set out in the ADR Directive 2013/11/EU, as amended by [Directive \(EU\) 2025/2647](#),

Or be,

- (d) entities established in countries associated to the Single Market Programme, covering the Consumer pillar and for which the competent national authority confirms in writing the *mutatis mutandis* designation in compliance with Article 4 of the Representative Actions Directive (EU) 2020/1828

Or be,

- (e) exceptionally, and only in EU Member States where *ad hoc* designation is

allowed, entities which comply with the criteria set out in the national legislation transposing Article 4, paragraph 6 of the Representative Actions Directive (EU) 2020/1828, for being designated on *ad hoc* basis. Applicants must present the proof of their compliance with these criteria issued by the competent national authority or public body.

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, origin and in case of Qualified Entities designated pursuant to Directive (EU) 2020/1828, the proof of their designation.

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

Specific cases and definitions

Exceptional funding — Entities from other countries (not listed above) are exceptionally eligible, if the granting authority considers their participation essential for the implementation of the action.

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 NOT eligible.

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 persons¹¹.

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'¹².  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)¹³. Such entities are not eligible to

¹¹ See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#)

¹² For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹³ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092¹⁴. 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 Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 16 December 2022).

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

Consortium composition

Proposals may be submitted by a single applicant as well as by a consortium.

In case of a multi-beneficiary grant - Consortium composition: each of the beneficiary entities within the consortium has to be eligible as per the conditions above. Entities can originate from the same or different eligible countries.

Applicants may submit more than one application. Applicants who submit multiple applications must clearly explain how each proposal differs from the other(s).

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).

Eligible activities

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

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

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

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities (*such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc*). Projects must also respect EU values and European Commission policy regarding reputational matters (*e.g. activities involving capacity building, policy support, awareness raising, communication, dissemination, etc*)¹⁵.

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*).

¹⁴ 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).

¹⁵ See, for instance, Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy.

Duration

The duration of the action is normally expected to be **24 months**. Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

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 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.

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

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

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 participate¹⁶:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct¹⁷ (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 EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation,

¹⁶ See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁷ '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.

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

- intentionally and without proper justification resisted¹⁸ 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 that¹⁹:

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

8. Evaluation and award procedure

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

An **evaluation committee** 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:

- 1) Projects focusing on a theme that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked projects will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) 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 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Quality'.
- 3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

¹⁸ '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.

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

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

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

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

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

9. Award criteria

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

- 1. Relevance (40 points):** clarity and consistency of project, objectives and planning; extent to which they match the themes and priorities and objectives of the call; 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 to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation
- 2. Quality:**
 - **Project design and implementation (30 points):** technical quality; logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept); methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, management, procedures, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation); feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money)
 - **Project team and cooperation arrangements (10 points):** quality of the consortium and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium
- 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; sustainability of results after EU funding ends.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	24	40
Quality – Project design and implementation	18	30
Quality – Project team and cooperation arrangements	6	10
Impact	12	20
Overall (pass) scores	60	100

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 24/40, 18/30, 6/10 and 12/20 points.

Overall threshold: 60 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds 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*). Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. 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

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 are mandatory for *RAD Qualified Entity* applicants:

Actions by Qualified Entities to be funded under present call should be conceived in a way that leads to concrete, tangible, well documented and reported results. The applications should describe in detail the reporting methodology. Such methodology should ensure that beneficiaries of the present call report to the European Commission via EC-REACT, indicatively every four months, and throughout the timeline of their actions, on their actions' objectives, progress and results.

In addition, individual or group with other beneficiaries, in person or online meetings will be organised by EISMEA in cooperation with DG JUST to discuss with participating

Qualified Entities the progress of actions indicatively at least every 4 months throughout the duration of the actions.

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*).

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (**80%**).

Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount (*see art 22.3*).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc*).

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:

- A. Personnel costs
 - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
 - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
 - C.1 Travel and subsistence
 - C.2 Equipment
 - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost²⁰: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost²¹: Yes²²

²⁰ Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7115).

- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: non-deductible/non-refundable VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
 - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
 - 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
 - other ineligible costs: No

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 **70%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be no interim 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 you or 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 and the costs declared.

²¹ Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

²² See [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#), art 6 on eligible costs: travel and subsistence costs must be declared using the unit cost according to Annex 2a of the grant agreement. If a particular instance of travel, accommodation or subsistence in the action is not covered by one of the unit costs mentioned in Decision C(2021)35 the actual costs may be used.

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
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: Yes

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

- communication and dissemination plan: No
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Specific rules for carrying out the action: see *Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5)*: n/a

Other specificities

Consortium agreement: Yes, for multi-beneficiary grants

Non-compliance and breach of contract

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

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

11. How to submit an application

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

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

a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

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

b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 3 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
- 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 may 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.

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 Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

Contact

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

Non-IT related questions should be sent **not later than 14 May 2026, at 17:00:00 (CET)** to the following email address: EISMEA-CONS-grants@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 Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

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

- **Coordinator** — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any). If affiliated entities participate in your project, please do not forget to provide documents demonstrating their affiliation link to your organisation as part of your application.
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants; projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (see [AGA – Annotated 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 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](#).