



Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)

Call for proposals

Agri-food Biotech Scaling-up

(SMP-COSME-2026-BIOAGRIFOOD)

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EISMEA.I – Innovation ecosystems, SMP/Entrepreneurship and Consumers
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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of sustainability of the agri-food industrial ecosystem under the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs strand of the **Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)**.

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 2026-2027 SMP Work Programme (³) and will be managed by the **European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)** ('Agency').

The call covers the following **topic**:

- **SMP-COSME-2026-BIOAGRIFOOD — Agri-food Biotech Scaling-up** (⁴)

Applicants can NOT submit more than one proposal under this call for proposals.

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

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

- the [Call document](#) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)

(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) (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 1).

(³) Annex 2 to the Commission Implementing Decision C(2025) 8895 final of 18.12.2025 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 programmes for 2026-2027.

(⁴) see Action 2.6 which is referred to as 'Creation of biohubs for strategic collaboration and SME support' in the 2026-2027 SMP Work programme.

- admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
- criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
- evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
- award criteria (section 9)
- legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
- how to submit an application (section 11)
- the Online Manual outlines the:
 - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
 - recommendations for the preparation of the application
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
 - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

You are also encouraged to visit the [EISMEA](#) website to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

The EU Biotech Act I

The EU Biotech Act I, proposed on 16 December 2025 ⁽⁵⁾, establishes measures to strengthen the EU's biotechnology and biomanufacturing sectors. It primarily focuses on health biotechnology but also includes provisions relevant to food and feed biotechnology. A key measure in that regard is the proposed amendment to the General Food Law Regulation ⁽⁶⁾ to broaden the scope of the pre-submission advice of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

The Act proposes more detailed pre-submission interaction, including on study design, between EFSA and applicants. This will be particularly helpful for SMEs, which are often inexperienced and lack in-house expertise. The extended advice will help clarify the specific information required in submissions and reduce delays in risk assessment processes.

This call for proposals will act as a pilot in advance of the entry into force of the EU Biotech Act I. By embedding coordinated regulatory guidance within the projects funded by this call, it will already enable SMEs to access structured support and to prepare more complete, higher-quality applications.

The Bioeconomy Strategy

⁽⁵⁾ [COM\(2025\) 1022, 'European Biotech Act'](#)

⁽⁶⁾ [Regulation \(EC\) No 178/2002](#)

The new EU Bioeconomy Strategy was adopted on 27 November 2025 ⁽⁷⁾. Following the EU Bioeconomy Strategy from 2018, it marks a shift towards a focus on industrial deployment, market scale-up, competitiveness and resilience.

The bioeconomy is defined as the activities that deliver sustainable solutions based on biological resources to create added value. These include products, services, science and a wide range of technologies benefiting different sectors. The Strategy acknowledges that food is a key part of the bioeconomy, and that several of its actions benefit food innovation and complement EU policies related to sustainable food systems.

The EU bioeconomy generated EUR 863 billion in value added in 2023 (5% of EU GDP) and employed 17.1 million people (8% of EU jobs). However, the Strategy highlights that the EU bioeconomy still has a huge untapped potential.

The Strategy recognises that bioeconomy start-ups and scale-ups face critical transition points often described as "valleys of death". The first occurs between demonstration and first commercial production, while the second arises after initial market entry, when companies seek to scale up to industrial production.

The Strategy aims to address these challenges through:

- technical support for SMEs scaling innovative bio-based products, particularly those based on advanced fermentation, including for food and feed;
- improved access to pilot and demonstration infrastructure and enhanced coordination on authorisation processes where relevant;
- facilitation of strong regional clusters coordinating infrastructure and investment planning;
- coordination within and between Member States, creating synergies with regional and national strategies.

By 2040, the Strategy envisions integrated biorefineries and advanced fermentation facilities operating across Europe.

This call for proposals implements the Strategy's commitments by funding collaboration between biotech clusters, with a focus on bio-based approaches in the food sector and technical support to SMEs to overcome the two "valleys of death".

The Life Sciences Strategy

The Life Sciences Strategy was published by the European Commission on 2 July 2025 ⁽⁸⁾, aiming to position the EU as the world's most attractive place for life sciences by 2030. The Strategy highlights that life sciences are of relevance to several different sectors, including the food sector.

The European life sciences sectors employed around 29 million people in 2022 and generated EUR 1.5 trillion in value added (9.4% of EU GDP). Europe has world-class research institutions and dynamic biotech clusters, but innovative companies struggle to scale up in Europe. Moreover, the venture capital investment lags behind the US and China. Fragmented research and innovation ecosystems also create structural barriers affecting life science value chains from laboratory to market. Finally, life science

⁽⁷⁾ [COM\(2025\) 960, 'A Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy'](#).

⁽⁸⁾ [COM\(2025\) 525, 'Choose Europe for life sciences: A strategy to position the EU as the world's most attractive place for life sciences by 2030'](#).

innovators must navigate complex regulatory frameworks, following both EU and national legislation that are often not sufficiently innovation-friendly or future-proof.

The Strategy aims, among other things, to:

- strengthen cooperation and optimise resources across the innovation value chain;
- support start-ups and SMEs in scaling breakthrough technologies;
- create innovation-friendly regulatory environments.

A key action mentioned in the Strategy is to explore a pilot identifying and exploiting collaboration opportunities between EU biotech clusters, with a focus on supporting the scaling-up of their start-ups and enhancing their global industrial innovation standing. This call for proposals implements that action.

The EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy

The EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy was launched on 28 May 2025 ⁽⁹⁾ to make Europe the best place in the world to launch and grow global technology-driven companies. The Strategy acknowledges that Europe's 35,000 early-stage companies and 3,400 tech scaleups are engines of disruptive innovation, having created three million jobs in the past decade.

However, between 2008 and 2021, nearly 30% of European unicorns relocated outside the EU. For biotech start-ups specifically, a clear funding gap persists for high-risk, capital-intensive technologies requiring investments above EUR 100 million, whilst fragmented access to infrastructure and services leaves many start-ups unable to identify the right support.

The Strategy intends to address these challenges through key actions, including:

- the launch of a Lab to Unicorn Initiative supporting European Startup and Scaleup Hubs to network and collaborate across borders, providing start-ups with access to services, infrastructures and corporates;
- the development of a Charter of Access for industrial users to research and technology infrastructures, including for start-ups and scale-ups.

This call for proposals contributes to the implementation of the Strategy by bringing together expertise across the EU, facilitating access to scale-up infrastructure and providing regulatory support.

Vision for Agriculture and Food

The Vision for Agriculture and Food, published on 19 February 2025 ⁽¹⁰⁾, sets out the EU's strategic direction for the agri-food sector until 2040. It identifies innovation as essential for creating an attractive agri-food sector that leverages entrepreneurial potential, supported by skills to grasp opportunities from innovation, technology and

⁽⁹⁾ [COM\(2025\) 270, 'The EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy: Choose Europe to start and scale'](#).

⁽¹⁰⁾ [COM/2025/75, 'A Vision for Agriculture and Food: Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations'](#).

the green transition. According to the Vision, business support organisations should be mobilised to better support food processing SMEs and create virtual innovation hubs.

The Vision also emphasises that the bioeconomy and circularity offer great potential for the entire food system, with the new Bioeconomy Strategy aiming to accelerate commercialisation of bio-based and circular solutions, scale-up breakthrough biotechnologies and bridge investment gaps. This will benefit farming communities by enabling diversification of value streams and generating new jobs in rural areas. The Vision emphasises that keeping Europe's innovation edge in food technology, biotechnology and biomanufacturing is paramount for the EU to remain a world leader in food innovation.

This call for proposals contributes to the implementation of the Vision by strengthening the EU's capacity to lead in food-related biotechnology through cross-border cluster collaboration.

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

Objectives

This call for proposals aims to support projects, bringing together biotech clusters from different countries participating in the [Single Market Programme \(SMP\)](#). Each selected project will create a partnership aiming at gathering clusters, SMEs and other relevant stakeholders to reach a critical mass and develop structured collaboration enabling to compete with global hubs. Projects will have to contribute to EU priorities such as strategic autonomy, sustainability, resilience and food security.

The projects will provide scale-up support tailored to SMEs' needs – from applied R&D and co-innovation to piloting and demonstration – to strengthen their pathway towards first commercial production. They will also offer regulatory support to help SMEs navigate the relevant regulatory pathways for bringing their products to market.

Each SME will receive at least one type of support – either scale-up support to advance the product or process to the next development phase, or regulatory support to prepare for and achieve market entry. Where both are relevant to the SME's needs and can be delivered within available resources, combined support can be offered.

Themes and priorities (scope)

Projects are expected to focus on advanced fermentation for food and feed applications in the agri-food sector. Advanced fermentation refers to fermentation processes beyond traditional applications, including biomass and precision fermentation, that use specialised microorganisms to produce targeted outputs.

Proposals must cover all of the following priorities:

- establish a coherent strategic direction;
- facilitate knowledge exchange and networking;
- provide relevant scale-up support, including the use of appropriately equipped facilities;
- offer targeted advice in preparing regulatory dossiers.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

The project will include, at least the following **mandatory activities**:

Mandatory activity 1: Develop a strategy

The project must develop a comprehensive strategy for the partnership, which must define a clear vision and mission focused on structured collaboration to reach world-class scale and boost the competitiveness of the companies in the partnership.

The structured collaboration should include the systematic analysis of synergies between the companies in the partnership and the identification of potential synergies with the other project funded under this call for proposals to enhance collective impact.

The emphasis of the strategy must be on advanced fermentation for food and feed applications, but broader bio-based approaches that contribute to the bioeconomy may be incorporated where relevant.

The strategy must include at least the elements set out below.

- A marketing identity for the partnership, including a distinctive name.
- An explanation of how the partnership will support advanced fermentation as applied in food and feed production.
- An overview of potential synergies and coordination opportunities with the other project funded under this call.
- A timed roadmap on the development of structured collaboration, focused on innovation, start-up and scale-up support. This must also outline how the partnership will aim to operate beyond the project period, for example by exploring strategies for maintaining partner collaboration, potential revenue models or funding mechanisms for SME support.
- A market analysis assessing the competitive environment, the partnership's strategic positioning, and market opportunities and challenges for its SMEs in both European and international markets. For the international markets, the most promising non-EU markets must be chosen and a global commercialisation and representation approach for the SMEs must be defined. It is expected that, where appropriate, the SMEs of the partnership will be represented on those markets by the clusters (or similar organisations) leading the partnership. At least two international markets must be identified and the rationale behind this choice must be explained.
- A needs analysis identifying the conditions and capabilities required to develop, maintain, or relocate advanced fermentation production to Europe. The analysis should assess the structural enablers for competitive industrial-scale production in Europe, including infrastructure, cost competitiveness, the regulatory environment, skills availability, and access to finance. The primary focus should be on the specific needs of companies in the partnership to develop, maintain, or relocate production to the EU – particularly where their innovation capacity (including technologies and patents) and production capabilities are relevant to EU food security objectives. Based on this assessment, the strategy should set out concrete proposals, including on investments, to enable EU-based production.

The consortium applying for this call for proposals must have the operational means to coordinate the development of this strategy and establish the operational framework for the partnership. The strategy must specify how the partnership will leverage the expertise and infrastructure of its consortium partners, as well as contributions from external collaborators who are not funded by the project (e.g. related initiatives, networks or projects).

Mandatory activity 2: Foster network collaboration and identify SMEs for support

Sub-activity 2.1: Build a network of partners

For the purpose of extending the partnership's network and impact, the project must reach out to additional organisations across SMP participating countries that present synergies with the project activities and can contribute to the partnership's objectives. While these external collaborators will not be beneficiaries of the selected project, they will contribute to the objectives of the partnership through complementary actions, their own resources, expertise, and networks. For example, external collaborators engaged in related EU-funded initiatives may coordinate activities and share resources to create synergies with the project's work.

External collaborators could include organisations such as other biotech clusters, business organisations and industry associations, research institutions, regional development agencies, and relevant EU or national initiatives in agri-food biotech innovation. The proposal must explain how it will leverage its networks to engage with this broader stakeholder community. As part of this task, the project must work to broaden its impact by extending its geographical coverage as widely as possible, giving particular attention to regions not yet represented in the consortium.

It is expected that the project team of each selected project will participate in relevant meetings of the other funded project to maximise synergies. It is also expected that the project will consider initiatives mentioned in the EU Bioeconomy Strategy and the [Horizon Europe work programme 2026-2027](#) in relation to industrial symbiosis, biomass hubs and biomass flows.

Sub-activity 2.2: Identify and select SMEs

The project will adopt a two-level approach to the SME engagement under this sub-activity. The entry level will provide open access to horizontal services, such as networking, training, and knowledge-exchange activities, reaching a broader pool of SMEs across the network. This level will also provide tailored advice (see sub-activity 2.4). The advanced level will offer more targeted and intensive support to at least 10 selected SMEs (see sub-activity 3).

For the purpose of identifying and selecting the SMEs that will be supported by the project, all cluster organisations (both those part of the project and those engaged under sub-activity 2.1) and other relevant partners will reach out to as many relevant SMEs of their networks and geographical areas as possible. The proposal must specify the total number of SMEs it commits to select and support during the project duration.

It is expected that the project will cooperate effectively with the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and the European Clusters Collaboration Platform (ECCP) to reach SMEs and other stakeholders. The project should leverage these networks' extensive reach across SMP countries to identify SMEs and promote the partnership's activities to the wider agri-food and bioeconomy communities. In addition, the proposal may propose other networks that could be mobilised to achieve this.

To determine which SMEs will be selected for both levels of support, the proposal must describe the methodology to be used. The proposal must set out its core elements, while the detailed approach may be further developed during project implementation.

The project must accept and assess applications from SMEs from all SMP countries under equal and transparent conditions. In line with the objectives of the [Food Pillar](#) of the Single Market Programme, priority must be given to SMEs that make use of side streams, supporting food waste reduction and resource efficiency.

Sub-activity 2.3: Organise collaboration activities

The consortium must organise regular networking and knowledge exchange activities. These must include at least three in-person ⁽¹¹⁾ networking and knowledge exchange activities, such as workshops with technological experts from the partnership, cross-border mentoring initiatives, and matchmaking events between their companies.

The proposal must provide a description of these activities, including the format, objectives, topics, number of activities and participants. These activities must focus on specific topics (e.g., fermentation scale-up, regulatory pathways, access to finance).

The proposal must outline the approach to maximising participation of clusters, SMEs, and other relevant ecosystem stakeholders in the activities and stimulating geographic balance in terms of representation across SMP countries.

Sub-activity 2.4.: Engage SMEs through entry-level support

In addition to the open networking activities (sub-activity 2.3), the consortium must focus on engagement of SMEs at entry level. While these SMEs do not receive the intensive one-on-one advanced support of mandatory activity 3, they must benefit from personal engagement to help them navigate available support options and make valuable connections.

This must include at least one individual advisory meeting per SME to discuss their challenges and to connect them with relevant contacts and opportunities within the partnership. Following the advice, follow-up interactions should be maintained.

The proposal must describe how this SME engagement will be organised and implemented.

Mandatory activity 3: Support SMEs by delivering scale-up support and/or providing regulatory support

The project must support a minimum of 10 SMEs receiving one-on-one assistance tailored to their specific needs. This support must cover at least three SMEs under sub-activity 3.1 and at least three SMEs under sub-activity 3.2. The project must maximise the value and impact of its support by committing fully to each SME with sufficient resources, time and expertise.

The support must include process development services and regulatory guidance and, where appropriate and subject to SME readiness and the availability of project resources, access to facilities for scale-up validation. This in-depth support is expected to require significant time and resources per SME, for example through sustained process optimisation and scale-up activities, or through ongoing regulatory support involving the preparation and review of data and documentation over an extended period. Accordingly, the number of SMEs that can be supported under these activities will be limited.

The proposal must explain in detail the support services to be developed, the methodology for delivering each type of support, and the roles of consortium partners (including any affiliated entities) and other service providers, including subcontractors, involved in delivery. All support is expected to be delivered directly to selected SMEs as in-kind support.

Sub-activity 3.1: Deliver scale-up support (including piloting)

⁽¹¹⁾ With the possibility to include online participation where appropriate.

Scale-up support will focus on process development activities aimed at advancing fermentation-based processes towards the next stage of maturity. Support will be tailored to the development stage of each SME. It will mainly address key technical and economic aspects such as process optimisation, proof-of-concept refinement, scalability assessments and techno-economic evaluation.

Where appropriate, support will extend to scale-up activities at pilot or demonstration scale, such as process validation on scaled equipment, production of representative samples or confirmation of product quality. Access to pilot and demonstration facilities with appropriate fermentation and downstream processing equipment is expected where necessary to enable these scale-up activities. SMEs may access such facilities irrespective of their country of establishment, including by travelling to facilities located in other Member States. Where appropriate, such facilities may be provided by entities outside the consortium.

Given the resource-intensive nature of this type of support, it is recognised that it may only be feasible to deliver it to a limited extent. Proposals committing to provide substantial access to pilot facilities for multiple SMEs will be positively considered.

Sub-activity 3.2: Provide regulatory support

Regulatory support will focus on helping SMEs identify, understand, and navigate the applicable regulatory pathways relevant to their products and processes. This includes activities aimed at clarifying regulatory requirements and advising on how to address them, identifying the types of data and evidence needed for risk assessment, and guiding SMEs in the planning, generation, and compilation of regulatory documentation. The support will help SMEs prepare for regulatory submissions and informed engagement with competent authorities, with the objective of facilitating market entry.

In this context, the support will build on the direction set out in the Commission's proposed EU Biotech Act I, which foresees enhanced pre-submission interactions between applicants and EFSA. While these interactions will only be possible once the relevant provisions enter into force, the project will already pilot key elements of this approach. In particular, SMEs will be supported with early scientific guidance, for example on study design and data requirements relevant for EFSA risk assessments. Insights and lessons learned from the project are expected to be shared with EFSA, contributing to the development of effective and SME-friendly risk-assessment practices.

Mandatory activity 4: Communicate about the project and disseminate its outputs

The project must implement a comprehensive communication and dissemination strategy to create visibility, reach SMEs, and share learnings with the broader agri-food biotech ecosystem.

The project must develop and disseminate relevant materials, such as:

- success stories of SMEs that successfully scaled through project support;
- technical guides or toolkits on process scale-up or regulatory pathways;
- lessons learnt, such as sustainability considerations and policy recommendations.

The project must promote such materials and its activities through the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP). This must include regular updates on project activities and achievements, and active engagement with other clusters and initiatives on the platform. Promotion should also be carried out through other appropriate communication channels, including professional networks and social media (e.g. LinkedIn) to maximise visibility and outreach.

Expected impact

The impact of the mandatory activities listed above must be assessed against the following mandatory Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Number of collaboration activities (such as workshops, webinars, and other knowledge-exchange or networking events), **with a minimum of 3 activities**
- Number of participants in all collaboration activities in total, **with a minimum of 60 participants**
- Number of SMEs receiving entry-level support (through sub-activity 2.4), **with a minimum of 30 SMEs**
- Number of SMEs receiving scale-up support (through sub-activity 3.1), **with a minimum of 3 SMEs**
- Number of SMEs receiving regulatory support (through sub-activity 3.2), **with a minimum of 3 SMEs**
- Number of SMEs receiving support under activity 3 overall, **with a minimum of 10 SMEs**

Furthermore, proposals must measure the following overarching indicators from the Single Market Programme ⁽¹²⁾:

1. Number of SMEs, clusters and business network organisations, as well as business support organisations, receiving support from the programme, in particular for internationalisation, digitalisation and sustainability.
2. Number of companies supported having concluded business partnerships.
3. Number of entrepreneurs benefitting from mentoring and mobility schemes, including young, new and female entrepreneurs, as well as other specific target groups.

Applicants must include the above indicators and also propose further SMART (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) indicators. The proposal **must include target values and measurable quality standards** for the proposed indicators. The set of proposed indicators, including the above listed mandatory KPIs, must be included in the Application Form (Section 3.1. Impact and Ambition).

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is **EUR 3 000 000**.

We expect to fund 2 projects.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	25 March 2026

⁽¹²⁾ See Annex IV of the Single Market Programme Regulation [2021/690](#).

<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>2 June 2026 – 17:00:00 CET</u> (Brussels)
Evaluation:	June-July 2026
Information on evaluation results:	August 2026
GA signature:	November 2026
Estimated starting date of selected projects	December 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/calculator (template available in the Submission System; Tpl_Detailed Budget Table (SMP COSME GFS 90)).
 - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*).
 - Annex 5 to Part B - Eligibility checklist (that can be downloaded from [EISMEA's call page](#) and will need to be uploaded dully filled and signed together (as a single document) with the technical annex of the proposal entitled 'Application Form Part B' (SMP COSME) document. Please check carefully also Section 6 'Eligibility' of this call for proposals).

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

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

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

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

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

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

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

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

Specific cases and definitions

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 eligible. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons ⁽¹³⁾.

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

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' ⁽¹⁴⁾. ⚠ 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) ⁽¹⁵⁾. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092 ⁽¹⁶⁾. 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 must be submitted by a consortium of at least **three** applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from at least **two** different eligible countries, which complies with the following conditions:

- at least **two** cluster organisations (see definition below) or cluster networks from **two** different EU Member States that:
 - are registered or have a pending registration request to the ECCP ⁽¹⁷⁾ by the submission deadline of this call for proposals;
 - have a proven track record of at least three years in supporting biotech SMEs in the food and/or feed sector.
- any other relevant organisation(s) suitable for the implementation of the project.

For the purpose of this call for proposals, cluster organisations are understood as the legal entities that support the strengthening of collaboration, networking and learning in innovation clusters and act as innovation support providers by providing or channelling specialised and customised business support services to stimulate

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

⁽¹⁵⁾ 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](#).

⁽¹⁶⁾ 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).

⁽¹⁷⁾ <http://www.clustercollaboration.eu>

innovation activities, especially in SMEs. They are usually the actors that facilitate strategic partnering across clusters ⁽¹⁸⁾.

It is requested that all applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) fill in **Annex 5** to Part B - Eligibility checklist by providing:

- For cluster organisations and cluster networks from an EU Member State: a short description of their activities justifying a track record of at least 3 years in supporting biotech SMEs in the food and/or feed sectors;
- For cluster organisations and cluster networks from an EU Member State already registered in the European Cluster Collaboration Platform: the link to the completed cluster organisation profile for each applicant registered on the Platform must be provided; or
- For cluster organisations and cluster networks from an EU Member State not yet registered on the European Cluster Collaboration Platform: for each applicant, a declaration on their honour that they represent a cluster organisation or a business network organisation offering or channelling innovative support services to businesses (in compliance with the definition of 'innovation clusters'), together with proof that a cluster profile has been submitted to the ECCP for registration and is pending, with the respective information included in the descriptive form.

! Non concurrent participation!

It is recalled that **individual applicants** (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) **cannot participate in several proposals under this call for proposals**. If such a case is detected by the funding body, it will lead to the rejection of the applicant concerned. The respective consortia affected by the rejection of an applicant must still fulfil all the eligibility criteria stipulated in this section 6.

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*) ⁽¹⁹⁾.

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*).

⁽¹⁸⁾ Source: [Cluster Definitions | European Cluster Collaboration Platform](#).

⁽¹⁹⁾ See, for instance, Guidance on funding for activities related to the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Union legislation and policy.

Duration

Projects should normally last for 36 months.

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

Project budget

Project budgets (requested grant amount) are expected to be around EUR 1.500.000 per project.

This does not however preclude the submission/selection of proposals requesting other amounts. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

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 experience) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project
- description of the consortium participants
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*).

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

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate ⁽²⁰⁾:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct ⁽²¹⁾ (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)

⁽²⁰⁾ See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

⁽²¹⁾ '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.

- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted ⁽²²⁾ an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that ⁽²³⁾:

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

8. Evaluation and award procedure

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

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

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


Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:

- 1) The *ex aequo* proposals 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'.
- 2) 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.

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.

⁽²²⁾ '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.

⁽²³⁾ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

 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:** 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; potential to develop mutual trust/cross-border cooperation **(30 points)**
- 2. Quality:**
 - **Project design and implementation:** 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; clarity, consistency and rationale of the proposed support to SMEs; cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money) **(30 points)**
 - **Project team and cooperation arrangements:** quality of the consortium and project teams; appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium **(30 points)**
- 3. Impact:** credibility, ambition and expected medium and long-term impact of results on target groups/general public; expected impact on European SMEs benefiting directly from the action; appropriate, objectively verifiable and achievable performance indicators to measure project outcomes and expected impact; appropriate dissemination strategy for ensuring sustainability and long-term impact; sustainability of results after EU funding ends **(10 points)**.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	16	30
Quality — Project design and implementation	16	30

Quality — Project team and cooperation arrangements	16	30
Impact	6	10
Overall (pass) scores	70	100

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 16/30, 16/30, 16/30 and 6/10 points.

Overall threshold: 70 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.

Furthermore, beneficiaries will be requested to submit the following mandatory deliverables:

Mandatory activities	Mandatory Deliverables
Project management	Progress report (not linked to a request for payment) on the achievement of performance indicators covering every 9 months of the project implementation.
Strategy development	A comprehensive strategy document including vision and mission statements, approach to addressing scale-up and regulatory bottlenecks, high-level description of support services, marketing and communication approach and key performance indicators.

Network collaboration and SME identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder and collaboration mapping – describing engaged external collaborators, geographic coverage, and how complementarities and synergies with related initiatives were leveraged. SME identification and selection report – outlining the outreach approach, selection methodology, and the SMEs engaged. Collaboration activities report – documenting the networking and knowledge-exchange activities organised, including thematic workshops, participation levels, and geographic coverage. Individual support report – documenting the personal engagement provided to SMEs, individual meetings held, advice provided and connections facilitated, and follow-up interactions maintained throughout the project.
SME support	Detailed records of SMEs supported, types and intensity of support provided, progress achieved, and outcomes.
Communication and dissemination	Communication and dissemination package, including dissemination materials and online resources showcasing the project’s activities, success stories, and key outputs.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

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

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

The grant will be a 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 (**90%**).

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
- D. Other cost categories: not applicable
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost ⁽²⁴⁾: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost ⁽²⁵⁾: Yes ⁽²⁶⁾
- 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
 - kick-off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
 - 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

²⁴ 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).

²⁵ 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).

²⁶ 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.

- 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 **50%** 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 one **interim payment** (with detailed cost reporting).

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 and units declared.

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):*

- list of background: No
- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5): not applicable*

Other specificities

Consortium agreement: Yes

Non-compliance and breach of contract

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



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

11. How to submit an application

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

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

a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

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

b) **submit the proposal**

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

Submit your proposal in 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 at the latest 5 working days before the call submission deadline to the following email address: EISMEA-SMP-COSME-ENQUIRIES@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, 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 can NOT submit more than one proposal under this call for proposals. If such a case is detected by the funding body, it will lead to the rejection of the applicant concerned. The respective consortia affected by the rejection of an applicant must still fulfil all the eligibility criteria stipulated in section 6.
- **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](#).