



Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPA)

Call for proposals

Safeguarding Europe's born-digital heritage
PPPA-2026-BORN-DIGITAL

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
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CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY

CNECT.G – Data
CNECT.G.02 – Interactive Technologies, Digital for Culture and Education

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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O. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU action grants in the field of pilot projects and preparatory actions.

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

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))¹ Pilot project within the meaning of Article 58(2)(a).

The call is launched in accordance with the Financing Decision² and will be managed by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT).

The call covers the following topic:

- **PPPA-2026-BORN-DIGITAL-HERITAGE — Safeguarding Europe's born-digital heritage**

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

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

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

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 Commission Decision C(2026) 1770 final of 20.3.2026 concerning the adoption of the work programme and the financing decision for the implementation of the pilot projects and preparatory actions in the field of "Communications Networks, Content and Technology" for year 2026.

- 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.*).

1. Background

Born-digital heritage **is part of Europe's** cultural heritage. It is a wealth of digital resources and represents a vibrant and growing part of the wider historical record that future generations should have access to. Born-digital heritage offers opportunities for new and diverse voices to emerge and be heard and explored. Its preservation is key for preserving linguistic and cultural diversity, and for securing an important part of the cultural record and knowledge of today and past decades.

EU regulatory, funding and cooperation actions aim to provide wider access to digitised copies of physical cultural heritage, such as the Digital Single Market Directive (2019/790) provisions on digitisation and on access to out of commerce works, the Recommendation on a common European data space for cultural heritage ((EU) 2021/1970) and the related work of the Europeana Initiative encourages digitisation and digital preservation and facilitates the free flow of cultural heritage data.

In comparison with European and national initiatives for the digital preservation of physical cultural heritage however, safeguarding born-digital heritage is lagging behind. Typically, born-digital heritage assets are not systematically available on servers of heritage institutions and do not fall under current preservation provisions, therefore many works are extremely vulnerable to disappearing.

Born-digital heritage³ material and (related) data hold potentially significant value for researchers, innovators and other public and economic actors today and in the future. Nevertheless, accidents, economic factors, hardware, software and format obsolescence and simply the deletion of material that may have important historical but no perceived economic value for their holders are some of the causes of this vulnerability. Due to the lack of preservation, potentially only a very small share of the cultural, research, news and other materials that are shaping our world today will survive to document the past or be part of the public domain.

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

PPPA-2026-BORN-DIGITAL-HERITAGE — **Safeguarding Europe's born-digital heritage**

Objectives

The overall objective of this pilot project is to assess the state-of-play of the preservation of and access to born-digital heritage in the EU in order to develop a roadmap for progress towards adapting legal deposit laws and best practices.

The project should provide a comprehensive mapping of the preservation and access

³ For the purpose of this pilot project, born-digital heritage are material originally created in digital form and which do not have a physical equivalent (such as texts, images, sound, such as eBooks, electronic journals, online media, blogs, websites, video games, *etc.*), in line with the UNESCO/PERSIST Guidelines of [2016](#) and [2021](#) and the [Recommendation](#) on a common European data space for cultural heritage.

to such material and related data in the EU as regards existing legislative and non-legislative frameworks, initiatives, practices.

The development of the roadmap should be based on testing the feasibility, usefulness and potential impact of different measures and actions, supported by the outcomes of the exploratory assessment and mapping activities.

Themes and priorities (scope)

The pilot project will assess the present situation of born-digital heritage material and related data in the EU, in particular:

It will map and assess in which areas born-digital heritage is already being preserved, what types of such material is being preserved and what types are not, and the reasons behind their preservation or lack thereof, including relevant technical aspects.

It will examine and map relevant European and national regulatory frameworks, good practices, barriers and challenges, and other factors influencing the preservation or lack thereof of and access to born-digital heritage.

The research, mapping, assessment and roadmap development should include and take into account the most extensive range of types of born-digital heritage possible, and must include digital art, web archives, content created outside cultural heritage institutions, and video games.

The pilot project should explore and provide clarity, based on EU law, to heritage institutions and other relevant stakeholders about the possibilities for the creation of preservation copies of material that can be licensed or otherwise legally accessed but not acquired⁴.

The project is expected to leverage the expert knowledge and networks, available data and frameworks built up by existing preservation initiatives, as well as technical and legal knowledge of relevant stakeholders, inter alia libraries and archives, including the common European data space for cultural heritage and the Europeana initiative etc.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

To produce a comprehensive strategy for improving the preservation and access to **Europe's born-digital** cultural heritage based on data, legal and policy analysis, stakeholder insights and practical recommendations, the scope of the pilot project is:

1. Assessing the share of Europe's born-digital cultural heritage being preserved

- Providing clear qualitative baseline as percentage or estimate of born-digital cultural heritage currently preserved in Europe, by country and sector (e.g. museums, libraries, archives), and type of content (e.g. websites, digital art, video games) and identify relevant repositories of born-digital heritage and related data;
- Identifying significant gaps between what is preserved and defining and prioritising what should be preserved for research, innovation and other areas in different sectors,
- identifying born-digital heritage at risk;

⁴ E.g., Article 6 of the DSM Directive allows for preservation of works in an institution's permanent collection.

- Raising awareness and increasing the visibility and the scale of the preservation challenge among policymakers, institutions, and the public through efficient communication channels, including via a project website⁵.
2. Mapping the legal and policy landscape for preservation and access
- Providing a comprehensive overview of current laws, regulations, and policies affecting born-digital heritage preservation and access across Europe, including differences and harmonisation opportunities;
 - Identifying how existing frameworks (e.g. EU legislation, national archival laws) support or hinder preservation and access, with case studies of successful or problematic implementations;
 - Inventorying ongoing initiatives (e.g. Europeana, national digital archives) and their legal contexts, showing where collaboration or legal reform is most needed.
 - Providing clear recommendations for possible legal and policy adjustments or new instruments to address gaps, such as standardised licensing models or exceptions for institutions and/or activities in relation to born-digital heritage.
3. Mapping non-legislative factors influencing preservation practices
- Identifying a list of key non-legal barriers (e.g. technical, financial, organisational, cultural) affecting preservation and access, evidenced by interviews and/or surveys;
 - Identifying good practices and documenting of innovative solutions used by institutions to overcome barriers;
 - Exploring how different stakeholders (e.g. creators, institutions, funders, users) perceive and prioritise born-digital preservation, exposing misalignments or opportunities for collaboration;
 - Developing practical tools or guidelines to help institutions navigate non-legal challenges, such as technical standards, funding strategies, or advocacy templates, and proposals for scalable pilot programs for institutions bases on these to test new approaches, and communicate them through relevant communication channels.
4. Establishing recommendations for legislative and non-legislative measures
- Establishing a prioritised list of potential legislative changes (e.g. in relation to copyright law, mandatory deposit requirements for digital content) and non-legislative actions (e.g. funding programs, training initiatives, public-private partnerships);
 - Testing the feasibility and providing a realistic, step-by-step implementation roadmap for adopting measures, including timelines, responsible actors, and **expected outcomes, based on the results of the project's activities strands**;
 - Developing and testing a communication plan/advocacy strategy to build support and awareness among policymakers, institutions, and the public;
 - Organising a closing event to bring together relevant stakeholders in

⁵ Social media platforms, events, etc. for sharing communication and advocacy material and other relevant results and outcomes

discussions and to amplify the impact of the project's results.

Expected impact

The project will explore the feasibility of a roadmap based on the assessment of the situation around the preservation of born-digital heritage, the mapping of legal and non-legal frameworks and the adoption of good practices that would help further born-digital heritage preservation. It will provide information regarding challenges and barriers related to existing legal and non-legal frameworks, such as copyright, digital storage, licencing, etc., and practical solutions to contribute to wider born-digital heritage preservation.

Overall, the project should contribute to **stakeholders and interested parties'** understanding of the legal and policy situation and practices related to the preservation of and access to born-digital heritage, and present possible ways forward to facilitate the preservation of and access to born-digital heritage by:

- delivering a clear assessment of the share and types of born-digital cultural heritage being preserved in the EU, and of what should be preserved from the perspectives of different fields and in the context of possible (re)use of the preserved digital assets;
- providing a mapping of national, European and international legal, regulatory and policy frameworks⁶, past and ongoing initiatives, good practices related to and relevant for the preservation of and access to (licensed) born-digital cultural heritage;
- assessing and reporting on other (non-legislative) factors that may be influencing practices for the preservation of and access to born-digital heritage; and
- establishing a roadmap and recommendations, and a list of legislative and non-legislative measures which could facilitate and foster optimal practices across Europe for the preservation of born-digital heritage and access to such resources;
- raising awareness among policymakers, institutions and public about importance of born-digital heritage and the challenges of preservation, its challenges and benefits.

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is EUR 1 985 000. The EU co-financing is limited to a maximum of 85% of the total eligible costs.

We expect to fund 1 project for a maximum expected grant amount of EUR 1 985 000.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

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.

⁶ Including relevant EU policy frameworks and legislation, such as DSM Directive, copyright regulation, Recommendation for a common European data space for cultural heritage, Culture Compass for Europe, Data Union Strategy, etc.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	04 June 2026
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>16 July 2026 – 17:00:00 CEST</u> <u>(Brussels)</u>
Evaluation:	July-September 2026
Information on evaluation results:	September-October 2026
GA signature:	November/December 2026

Duration

A duration of 18 months is considered sufficient for the implementation of the pilot project.

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

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
 - CVs (standard) of core project team
 - **applicants'** activity reports of last year

- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*).

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. Shorter proposals are welcome.

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))

The call is open to legal entities established in the EU, in particular non-profit organisations, for-profit private organisations, international organisations, public bodies, academia/universities/research organisations.

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

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

Specific cases and definitions

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible.

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 persons⁷.

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

Affiliated entities⁸ — Legal entities having a legal or capital link with applicants, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, may take part in the action as affiliated entities, and may declare eligible costs as specified in section 10. For that purpose, applicants shall identify such affiliated entities in the proposal and application form.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as **'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'**⁹. ⚠ 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).

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)¹⁰. 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 2020/2092¹¹. 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).

The indicative list of affected entities (the trusts and the entities they maintain) is available under this link¹². This link will bring you to the official Annex to Hungarian Act IX of 2021.



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

The identity of the applicant (and compliance with general eligibility conditions) will be verified through the documents provided in the [Participant Register](#) during legal entity validation (copy of the resolution, decision or other official document establishing the entity, etc).

[Consortium composition](#)

⁷ See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

⁸ In accordance with Article 190 FR, entities that satisfy the eligibility criteria and that do not fall within one of the situations referred to in Articles 138(1) and 143(1) FR and that have a link with the applicant, in particular a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, will be considered as entities affiliated to the applicant.

⁹ For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁰ 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](#).

¹¹ 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).

¹² [2021. évi IX. törvény - Nemzeti Jogszabálytár](#)

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 5 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- minimum 5 independent entities from 5 different eligible countries.

Affiliated entities to a beneficiary, if any, do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves, do not count for the minimum number of applicants¹³.

Associated partners, if any, are considered third parties (see section 13). They do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves, are not applicants, not part of the consortium and hence do not count for the minimum number of applicants.

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.

If applicable, 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*).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Non eligible activities

Activities directed at EU institutions such as sending letters, organising meetings or providing advocacy material to EU institutions or specific members of an institution, or identifying specific members or officials of an institution to evaluate or describe their positions, or to discuss specific political content or outcome, are not eligible.

Geographic location (target countries)

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

Duration

A duration of 18 months is considered sufficient for the implementation of the pilot project.

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

Project budget

The project budget (requested grant amount) is expected to be around EUR 1 985 000.

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

¹³ Except for the case of 'Sole' beneficiary. Entity which itself is not a legal entity but is made up of several legal entities which satisfy the criteria for applying for a grant.

Ethics

Please refer to the general provisions in the MGA (Art. 14)

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards and
- applicable EU, international and national law.

Security

Please refer to the general provisions in the MGA (Art. 13)

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
- **applicants' activity reports of last year**
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*).

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

Public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check¹⁴.

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 participate¹⁵:

- 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 misconduct¹⁶ (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)

¹⁴ See also Article 198(6) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁵ See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

¹⁶ **'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.**

- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted¹⁷ 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 that¹⁸:

- 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, 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


¹⁷ '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.

¹⁸ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

'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.

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 the action
- Objectives and 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

2. Quality (40 points):

- Logical links between the identified problems, needs and solutions proposed (logical frame concept)
- Quality of the consortium and project teams
- Appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms for cooperating within the project teams and consortium

- Methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology, organisation of the work (procedures and allocation of resources), management, involvement of subcontractors, timetable, risks and risk management, monitoring and evaluation)
- Cost effectiveness (sufficient/appropriate budget for proper implementation; best value for money)

3. Impact (20 points):

- Ambition and expected long-term impact of results on target groups/general public
- Appropriate dissemination strategy
- Sustainability of results after EU funding ends.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	24	40
Quality	24	40
Impact	12	20
Overall (pass) scores	60	100

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 24/40, 24/40 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.

The pilot project start date is expected to be 1 January 2027 at latest.

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.

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 (85%).

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
 - A.5 Volunteers – N/A
- 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
 - D.1 Financial support to third parties
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:

- SME owner/natural person unit cost¹⁹: No
- volunteers unit cost²⁰: N/A
- travel and subsistence unit cost²¹: -Yes²²
- 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
 - 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), for a maximum 30% of the maximum grant amount.

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

¹⁹ 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).


²⁰ Commission [Decision](#) of 10 April 2019 authorising the use of unit costs for declaring personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or a work programme (C(2019)2646).

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.

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.

Prefinancing guarantees

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

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

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

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

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

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

Certificates

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

Liability regime for recoveries

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

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

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

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

Provisions concerning the project implementation

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

- rights of use on results: Yes

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

- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

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

- durability: No

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 to the following email address: CNECT-G2@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 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](#).