



Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

Call for proposals

CEF 2 Transport – Projects on the Core Network – Cohesion envelope
(CEF-T-2026-CORECOEN)

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EUROPEAN CLIMATE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EXECUTIVE AGENCY (CINEA)

CINEA.B – Sustainable networks and investments

CINEA.B.1 – CEF Transport: Northern Europe, Austria + MOS and ERTMS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction	5
1. Background.....	6
2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact	9
3. Available budget	10
4. Timetable and deadlines	10
5. Admissibility and documents	10
6. Eligibility.....	12
Eligible participants (eligible countries).....	12
Consortium composition	13
Eligible activities.....	13
Geographic location (target countries).....	14
Duration.....	14
Project budget.....	14
7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion.....	14
Financial capacity	14
Operational capacity	15
Exclusion.....	15
8. Evaluation and award procedure	16
9. Award criteria.....	17
10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements.....	18
Starting date and project duration	19
Milestones and deliverables.....	19
Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount.....	19
Budget categories and cost eligibility rules.....	19
Reporting and payment arrangements.....	21
Prefinancing guarantees	21
Certificates	22
Liability regime for recoveries	22
Provisions concerning the project implementation.....	22

Other specificities	23
Non-compliance and breach of contract	23
11. How to submit an application.....	23
12. Help	24
13. Important	25

O. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU action grants in the field of Transport under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

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

- Regulation 2024/2509 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))¹
- the basic act (CEF Regulation [2021/1153](#))².

The call is launched in accordance with the 2021-2027 Work Programme³ and will be managed by the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) ('Agency').

The call covers the following topics:

- **CEF-T-2026-CORECOEN-RAIL-WORKS: Rail – studies, works or mixed**

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic, must submit a separate proposal under each topic. Furthermore, the same activity / proposal can only be submitted to one call and one topic. If submitted to several calls or topics, proposals having totally or partially the same scope will be declared ineligible.

Transfer of applications between calls and/or topics will not be made.

Topics under this call are linked⁴ to other CEF Transport calls: CEF-T-2026-COREGEN, CEF-T-2026-MILMOB, CEF-T-2026-SIMOBGEN, CEF-T-2026-SAFEMOBGEN, CEF-T-2026-SUSTMOBGEN, CEF-T-2026-AFIFGEN. The grants for twinned proposals will be managed as linked actions.

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) 2021/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (OJ L 249, 14.7.2021, p. 38).

³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2026)3720 final of 5.6.2026 amending Implementing Decision C(2021) 5763 final on the financing of the Connecting Europe Facility - Transport sector and the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2027

⁴ Linked / twinned proposals concern the same project submitted under different calls and/or topics. Each proposal will be evaluated on its own merits – and based on the award criteria detailed in the Call document while taking into account the twinning with other applications. This means that when submitting twinned proposals, the applicant must cross-reference the twinned proposal(s) in Parts A and B of the application form.

- 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 [CINEA website](#) to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

This call resorts under the Connecting Europe Facility 2021-2027⁵ – multiannual work programme for the transport sector⁶. The programme has the general objective to build, develop, modernise and complete the trans-European networks, taking into account the Union long-term decarbonisation commitments, and thus to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to enhance territorial, social and economic cohesion. It shall contribute to the development of projects of common interest relating to efficient, interconnected, and multimodal networks and infrastructure for sustainable, smart, interoperable, inclusive, accessible, resilient, safe and secure mobility. It shall contribute to more sustainable modal composition of the transport system, in order to meet EU climate neutrality and zero pollution ambitions by 2050.

CEF contributes to the EU goal of climate-related spending and decarbonising transport. In accordance with the European Green Deal, CEF 2021-2027 will target a contribution of 60% of its overall financial envelope to co-financing projects supporting climate objectives and moving fast towards zero-emission mobility. A methodology to track climate expenditures against the targets set has been developed by the Commission and will be applied to all projects under CEF⁷.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) No 283/2014 (OJ L 249, 14.7.2021, p. 38).

⁶ Commission Implementing Decision C(2026)3720 final of 5.6.2026 amending Implementing Decision C(2021) 5763 final on the financing of the Connecting Europe Facility - Transport sector and the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2027.

⁷ Annex I to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the

The implementation of the multiannual work programme aims at contributing to the completion of the Trans-European Networks - Transport (TEN-T), thereby further enhancing sustainable and smart mobility. It is expected that granting of support on the basis of this multiannual work programme will contribute to the timely and efficient development of the TEN-T Core Network, support the realisation of a robust and resource-efficient European transport system and address climate change in accordance with the European Green Deal.

As specified in the revised TEN-T Regulation⁸, the Trans-European Transport Network should be gradually developed in three steps: completion of a core network by 2030, of an extended core network by 2040 and the comprehensive network by 2050.

Projects containing infrastructure components should align with the transport infrastructure requirements specified in the revised TEN-T Regulation.

The granted support will directly contribute, inter alia, to the achievement of important transport policy objectives, such as establishing major interoperable transport axes interconnecting national networks and facilitating the functioning of the internal market, the optimal use of existing infrastructure capacities, improving the safety and reliability of the network, fostering cohesion and cross-border mobility, enhancing accessibility of peripheral areas of the Union, enhancing an integrated multimodal approach aiming at shifting a considerable part of transport that currently takes place by road towards more sustainable transport modes, increasing the capacity and performance of rail, inland waterways and short sea shipping infrastructure, contributing to a more balanced modal distribution, and reducing the negative environmental impacts of transport, in particular as regards GHG emissions.

In developing a resource-efficient and resilient network, as specified in article 5 (g) of the revised TEN-T Regulation, projects should also take into account the decarbonisation of infrastructure construction⁹ as part of the exercise for climate proofing of infrastructure. The type of measures (if any) taken to decarbonise the **project's implementation should be described under the award criterion "Impact"**.

In the context of the evaluation and selection of proposals, the assessment of the **award criterion "Priority and urgency" will, where relevant, also take into account the priorities set in: the Commission's High-Speed Rail Communication¹⁰; the Military Mobility Package¹¹; the Clean Transport Corridor Initiative, the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance and the Large-scale cross-border testbeds for autonomous vehicles – all three under the Automotive Action Plan¹²; the Autonomous Drive Ambition Cities initiative under the Apply AI strategy¹³; the EU industrial**

Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159).

⁸ Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1153 and (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013.

⁹ [Decarbonisation of the Transport Infrastructure Construction Report](#)

¹⁰ COM(2025) 903 final of 5.11.2025: Connecting Europe through High-Speed Rail.

¹¹ [Commission moves towards 'Military Schengen' and transformation of defence industry - Mobility and Transport](#)

¹² COM(2025) 95 final of 5.3.2025: Industrial Action Plan for the European automotive sector.

¹³ COM (2025) 723 final of 8.10.2025: Apply AI Strategy.

maritime strategy¹⁴; the EU ports strategy¹⁵; and the Industrial Accelerator Act¹⁶; as well as the '100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities'¹⁷.

In addition, under this call, the improvement of the transport infrastructure resilience, in particular the additional investments to adapt/upgrade the intended infrastructure to climate change, natural disasters and/or cyber security threats, can also be part of the project proposal, if relevant for the project.

¹⁴ COM(2026) 111 final of 4.3.2026: EU Industrial Maritime Strategy.

¹⁵ COM(2026) 112 final of 4.3.2026: EU Ports Strategy.

¹⁶ COM(2026) 100 final of 4.3.2026: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework of measures for the acceleration of industrial capacity and decarbonisation in strategic sectors and amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1724, (EU) 2024/1735 and (EU) 2024/3110.

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2591

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

CEF-T-2026-CORECOEN-RAIL-WORKS: Rail – studies, works or mixed

Objective: The objective of this call is to develop rail transport infrastructure projects on the TEN-T core¹⁸ network.

Scope: Works and / or studies related to:

- Construction/upgrading of cross-border and missing links;
- Interconnections between rail and other modes of transport, namely inland waterway and maritime transport (including port hinterland connections) and projects aimed at the integration of the high-speed rail and air networks to make the feeder network for long-haul flights more sustainable.

Priority will be given to projects fostering the development of high-speed rail in line with the Commission communication on high-speed rail¹⁹.

Support will not be given to railway stations, except for railway infrastructure components. If the project includes such components, they shall be presented as a separate work package. Support will not be given to track side ERTMS deployment, electronic interlockings and/or Class A radio communication (5G/FRMCS/GSM-R) components. Support will not be given to activities related to the Class B systems nor to rolling stock.

Projects shall comply with the provisions of Directive (EU) 2016/797²⁰ and with the related Technical Specifications for Interoperability. Where relevant, projects shall also be compatible with the alignment of operating procedures across borders to ensure the most effective use of the supported infrastructure.

In case a proposal combines studies and works components, these must address different sections / activities.

Facilities and infrastructure supported under CEF must be accessible for use by all operators on a non-discriminatory basis.

¹⁸ For the purpose of this call, project proposals located on the extended core network are not eligible.

¹⁹ COM(2025) 903 final of 5 November 2025.

²⁰ Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the interoperability of the rail system within the European Union (*OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, p. 44*) which replaces Directive 2008/57/EC as of 31 October 2020.

3. Available budget

The available call budget is EUR 260 000 000.

Depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation, we reserve the right:

- To use the flexibility provided in the 2021-2027 Work Programme to exceed the indicative call budget; or
- not to award all available funds.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	18 June 2026
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<u>06 October 2026 – 17:00:00 CET</u> <u>(Brussels)</u>
Evaluation:	October – March 2027
Information on evaluation results:	April 2027
GA signature:	May/June 2027

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 per WP (budget must be rounded down to the nearest thousand)
- activity reports of last year (unless exempted from operational capacity check; *see section 7*)²¹
- list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (*template available in Part B*)²²
- timetable/Gantt chart
- letters of support (MS agreement)²³
- cost benefit analysis:
 - for works and mixed²⁴ projects with budget (total eligible costs) above EUR 10 000 000: full cost-benefit analysis (CBA) (report and cash flow template)
 - for works and mixed projects with budget (total eligible costs) below EUR 10 000 000: simplified CBA calculator
- environmental compliance file²⁵
- other annexes (if applicable)

For applications concerning projects subject to an EIA²⁶, you may include a summary **of the climate proofing process in the Portal Submission System under “Other Annexes”**.

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.

²¹ Public bodies, Member State organisations, and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check. Also, beneficiaries of grants under CEF 1 and CEF 2 are not required to submit this annex.

²² Public bodies, Member State organisations, and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check. Also, beneficiaries of grants under CEF 1 and CEF 2 are not required to submit this annex.

²³ Letters of support are signed by the Member State or third country associated to CEF programme benefitting from the project.

²⁴ In mixed proposals, the threshold of EUR 10 000 000 applies to the work component(s) of the eligible costs.

²⁵ The environmental compliance file (ECF) must be submitted for all applications under this call. The ECF contains (i) the cover page, (ii) the Environmental Compliance Questionnaire, consisting of Sections 1. Development Consent, 2. Compliance with the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU), 3. Compliance with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC), 4. Compliance with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and 5. Compliance with the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Declaration for the monitoring of the Natura 2000 sites and the Declaration under the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC. The declarations accompanying the file must be submitted in addition, when applicable, and do not replace the environmental compliance file.

For studies projects without physical interventions and works projects that do not affect significantly the environment, the ECF must be uploaded by ticking the box of 'project type', and including in the comments boxes for each question 'not applicable'. The works projects that do not affect significantly the environment concern applications for new technologies and innovation and vessels.

²⁶ If the key steps for the EIA have been completed (i.e. an environmental impact assessment report prepared by the project promoter and consultations carried out under the EIA Directive), the applications are under the obligation to submit the information on the climate proofing process, taking into account the Commission Notice: [Technical guidance on the climate proofing of infrastructure in the period 2021-2027, C\(2021\)5430 of 29 July 2021](#).

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 120 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.:
 - be established in one of the Member States eligible for funding from the Cohesion Fund²⁷

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 for projects of common interest in the field of transport, energy and digital and for cross-border projects in the field of renewable energy, 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).

²⁷ Only applicants from countries that are eligible to the Cohesion Fund according to Annex IV of the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1130 are eligible to submit proposals under this call for proposals.

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 persons²⁸.

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

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations for participating 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)²⁹. 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 2020/2092³⁰. 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](#) of 15 December 2022).



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

Consortium composition

Not applicable

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).

²⁸ See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

²⁹ 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](#).

³⁰ 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).

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

Geographic location (target countries)

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

Duration

See section 10.

Project budget

In order to ensure efficiency in EU funding interventions, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications for projects with a total requested EU contribution to the eligible costs of no less than EUR 1 000 000. Where possible, related projects should be grouped and submitted as one proposal.

The maximum EU contribution per grant agreement shall be capped at:

- EUR 30 000 000 if the project is located in a single Member State
- EUR 70 000 000 if the project is located in two Member States
- EUR 100 000 000 if the project is located in more than two Member States.

Proposals requesting higher amounts will be declared ineligible.

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:

- 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 check³¹.

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 participate³²:

- 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)

³¹ Beneficiaries of grants under CEF 1 and CEF 2 are also exempted from the operational capacity checks under this call.

³² See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with **unlimited liability for the applicant's debts**)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct³³ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted³⁴ 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 that³⁵:

- 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).

³³ '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.

³⁴ '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.


³⁵ See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

An evaluation committee (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated against the operational capacity and award criteria (3 phases: individual evaluation, consensus phase and panel review) and then ranked according to their scores (*see sections 7 and 9*).

For proposals with the same score a priority order will be determined according to the following approach:

1. Score obtained under the 'Priority and urgency' criterion
2. Score obtained under the 'Maturity' criterion
3. Score obtained under the 'Catalytic effect' criterion
4. Score obtained under the 'Impact' criterion
5. Score obtained under the 'Quality' criterion.
6. Recommended EU Contribution (ascending order)

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. **Priority and urgency:** evaluating the correspondence of the proposal with the sectoral policy objectives and priorities, measuring its Union added value and where applicable assessing the possible synergies with other sectors (5 points)
2. **Maturity:** assessing the maturity of the Action in the project development. The criterion will measure, among others: i) the readiness/ability of the project to start by the proposed start date and to complete by the proposed end date, ii) the status of the contracting procedures and of the necessary permits, and iii) information on the financial availability needed to complement the CEF investment. (5 points)

3. **Quality:** evaluating the soundness of the implementation plan proposed, both from the technical and financial point of view, the architecture and design approach, the organisational structures put in place (or foreseen) for the implementation, the risk analysis, the control procedures and quality management and the communication strategy of the applicant. Moreover, when applicable, it will also assess the information related to the maintenance strategy proposed for the completed project. (5 points)
4. **Impact:** assessing, when applicable, the economic, social and environmental impact, including the climate impact, and other relevant externalities. This criterion may be substantiated by a Cost Benefit Analysis or, in the absence of such tools, other forecast of end-user take-up, in which case the evaluation will look at the soundness, comprehensiveness, and transparency of the analysis as well as proposed means to monitor its impact. Moreover, when applicable, the criterion will assess, among others, the innovation and digitalisation, safety and interoperability and accessibility aspects of the proposal, as well as its cross-border dimension, effect/contribution to the network territorial accessibility. (5 points)
5. **Catalytic effect:** evaluating the effect of the EU financial assistance on the realisation of the project, for instance overcoming a financial obstacle generated by insufficient commercial viability, high upfront costs or the lack of market finance, increasing the capacity to mobilise differentiated investments sources, improving the quality of the project or accelerating the overall investment plan. (5 points)

Maximum points: 25 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 3/5, 3/5, 3/5, 3/5 and 3/5 points.

Overall threshold: 15 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 maximum project duration should be 31/12/2029 for studies and 31/12/2030 for works.

During implementation of the projects, if duly justified, extensions may be granted through an amendment to the Grant Agreement.

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.

Beneficiaries will also be invited to check and update information from the MAP-IT tool regarding network allocation and output indicators.

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 actual cost grant. 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).


The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rates fixed in the Grant Agreement, (maximum 85% (**'project funding rate'**)).

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*).

 Please be aware that project management costs (including related tasks, such as consortium-internal progress meetings, communication and dissemination, project reporting etc) should not exceed 10% of total costs for the project. Costs exceeding this limit will be rejected during grant preparation.

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
 - D.1 Financial support to third parties
 - D.2 Studies
 - D.3 Synergetic elements
 - D.4 Works in outermost regions
 - D.5 Land purchases
- E. Indirect costs


Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:


- personnel costs:
 - average personnel costs (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes
 - SME owner/natural person unit cost³⁶ : Yes
- subcontracting costs:
 - country restrictions for subcontracting costs: Yes, subcontracted work must be performed in the eligible countries or target countries
- travel and subsistence unit cost³⁷: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs: full cost
- other cost categories:
 - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
 - studies: Yes
 - synergetic elements: Yes (**only for 'works' projects, not for 'studies'**)
 - works in outermost regions: Yes
 - land purchases: Yes – up to 10% of the total eligible costs.
- indirect cost flat-rate :0% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any)
- VAT: VAT is NOT eligible
- other:

³⁶ 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).

³⁷ 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).

- in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
- project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' **websites or social media accounts** are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible
- eligible cost country restrictions: Yes, only costs for activities carried out in eligible countries or target countries are eligible
- other ineligible costs: Yes, costs related to purchase of land

 Please be aware that in case of significant changes to the circumstances that have an impact on the project budget, you may be asked to request an amendment to reduce the maximum grant amount. If you do not comply with this request, we may have to terminate the grant and reduce it from our side (*see art 32*).

 Similarly, you may be asked to request an amendment to reduce the maximum grant amount, if your project encounters major delays during the project implementation. If you do not comply with this request, we may have to terminate the grant (*see art 32*).

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. The amount will be established based on the grant type or estimated project duration at the time of grant signature and will vary between 25% and 50%. The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required — whichever is the latest).

There will be one or more interim payments (with detailed cost reporting).

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

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

 Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if 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).

The bank guarantee may exceptionally be replaced by a guarantee from a third party. Such approval will be granted only in exceptional cases, following a detailed financial and legal evaluation of the proposed third-party guarantor and must be confirmed in writing prior to submission.

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

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

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):*

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

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

- Member State information: Yes
- specific rules for digital infrastructure projects: No
- specific rules for ATM common projects: No
- durability: Yes
- specific rules for blending operations: No

Other specificities

N/A

Non-compliance and breach of contract

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



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

11. How to submit an application

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

Submission is a 2-step process:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

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

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

b) submit the proposal

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

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the page limits (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the right category in the Submission System, otherwise the proposal may be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted before the call deadline (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a confirmation e-mail (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

As far as possible, *please try to find the answers you need yourself*, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- [Online Manual](#)
- Topic Q&A on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions)
- call information on the [CINEA website](#).

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: CINEA-CEF-TRANSPORT-CALLS@ec.europa.eu

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (*see cover page*).

13. Important



IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait** until the end — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute technical problems. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- Consult the Portal 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).

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

- **Balanced project budget** — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully (*e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc*). You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).
- **Completed/ongoing projects** — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).
- **No-profit rule** — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.
- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding** — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate **funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions')**. Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants; projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).
- **Combination with EU operating grants** — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice (*see [AGA – Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#)*).
- **Multiple proposals** — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them).
Organisations may participate in several proposals.
BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).
- **Resubmission** — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be rejected. This applies also to applicants: All applicants **need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they** must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.
- **Language** — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application.

- **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](#).