Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)

Call for proposals

CLOUD-DATA and AI
DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology

CNECT.R – Resources and Support
CNECT.R.5 – Programme Implementation

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the **field of Cloud, Data and Artificial Intelligence** under the **Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)**.

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

  − Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))

  − the basic act (Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694[1]).

The call invitation is launched in accordance with the 2023/2024 Work Programme[2] and will be managed by the **European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT)**.

The call covers the following **topics**:

  − **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-IPCEI-EXPLOIT** - Cloud IPCEI Exploitation Office

  − **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC** – Highly Secure Collaborative Platform for Aeronautics and Security Industry

  − **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-ICU-DATA** – Federated European Infrastructure for Intensive Care Units' (ICU) data

  − **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-GENOME** – Genome of Europe

  − **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-COORDINATEF** – Coordination of AI Sectorial Testing and Experimental Facilities

  − **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-DEVELOPCITI** – Developing CitiVerse

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.

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:

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[1] Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe programme for the period 2021-2027 (OJ L166, 11.05.2021).

[2] Commission Implementing Decision C2023/1862 final of 24.03.2023 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2024 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Digital Europe Programme.

- background, objectives, scope, outcomes and deliverables, KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables, targeted stakeholders, type of action and funding rate and specific topic conditions (sections 1 and 2)

- timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)

- admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)

- criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)

- evaluation and award procedure (section 8)

- award criteria (section 9)

- legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)

- how to submit an application (section 11).

- the Online Manual outlines the:

  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')

  - recommendations for the preparation of the application.

- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:

  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant *(including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc)*.

You are also encouraged to visit the Digital Europe Programme website to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

The Specific Objective 2 of the Digital Europe Programme aims to reinforce the EU's core Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cloud to Edge Computing and Data capacities as a crucial driver for the digital transformation of the public and private sectors. The EU Data Strategy[3] outlined the importance of building a thriving ecosystem of private and public actors to generate economic and societal value from data, while preserving high privacy, security, safety and ethical standards. It announced that the Commission will invest in a High Impact Project that will foster and exploit innovative, secure, energy efficient cloud-to edge capabilities, data-sharing tools, architectures and governance mechanisms for thriving data-sharing and Artificial Intelligence ecosystems. To reach these objectives, three main interlinked work strands are foreseen in the third and fourth years of implementation of the Digital Europe Programme:

- Continuation of activities in the area of cloud-to-edge infrastructure and services with two new topics foreseen for 2023.

  The monitoring, exploitation and medium term sustainability and economic viability of the cloud-to-edge advanced capabilities to be design and first industrially deployed under the pre-notified Important Project

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[3] Communication from the Commission, A European strategy for data; COM/2020/66 final

of Common European Interest on Next Generation Cloud Infrastructure and Services final Call: DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04 Cloud Data and AI EU Grants: Call document (DEP): V1.0 – 28.04.2023. Completing the picture, **the development of a commercially viable highly secure cloud-based collaborative platform** for the management of sensitive multi-country industrial initiatives in the aeronautics and security sector, including civil security.

- The deployment of a Data for EU strand with a focus on deploying sectorial common data spaces, based on the above federated cloud-to-edge infrastructure and services that are accessible to businesses and the public sector across the EU that were initiated in the first WP. Alongside the continuation of these actions, this WP foresees further actions in the area of Support for data in the EU, namely Open Data Portal, and new action to reinforce the green agenda such as Digital Product Passport. (Section 2.2)

- The continuation of work on AI reference testing and experimentation facilities with a focus on coordination of AI sectorial facilities that were established in the first WP (i.e. health, smart communities, manufacturing, and agriculture). (Section 2.3)

2. Objectives — Scope — Outcomes and deliverables — KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables — Targeted stakeholders — Type of action and funding rate — Specific topic conditions

DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-IPCEI-EXPLOIT — CLOUD IPCEI EXPLOITATION OFFICE

Objectives

The projects will support the overall monitoring, medium-term exploitation, sustainability and economic viability of the developped and first industrially deployed advanced cloud-to-edge solutions associated with the pre-notified Important Project of Common European Interest on Next Generation Cloud Infrastructure and Services (IPCEI-CIS) via the set-up of a Cloud IPCEI Exploitation Office.[4] The Office's main objectives are threefold. First, to further support the dissemination of the cloud-to-edge results of the pre-notified IPCEI and contribute to the further exploitation and re-use of its solutions including by those interested Member States, companies and Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) that are not participating in the IPCEI-CIS. Second, to support the further monitoring of the developed and deployed cloud-to-edge solutions associated to the IPCEI-CIS in particular in the context of European initiatives such as the Digital Compass and the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Third, to further contribute to frame the medium term sustainability, economic viability and governance of the IPCEI-CIS after State-aid will cease.

The pre-notified IPCEI-CIS aims at developing and industrially deploying, for the first time, a fundamentally new, innovative, secure and sustainable data processing production process spanning across the European Union. It will develop and deploy breakthrough technological cloud and edge computing capabilities and very high added value data processing industrial services. The pre-notified IPCEI-CIS will

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[4]   Action is subject to completion of the notifications process and assessment of the IPCEI in light of the IPCEI Communication C/2021/8481 final. Pre-notification by 12 Member States took place in April 2022.

contribute to existing European initiatives, in particular to the European Green Deal[5], the European Industrial Strategy[6], the Digital Compass[7] and directly to the implementation of the High Impact Project of the European Strategy for Data.[8]

The IPCEI Exploitation Office will not interfere with the individual responsibility of the Member States or companies to implement the Commission's decision on the IPCEI-CIS.

Scope

The aim of the projects will be to provide at minima the following three core strategic support activities via the set-up of a Cloud IPCEI Exploitation Office that will maximize the monitoring, exploitation and viability of the developed IPCEI solutions towards all interested Member States, companies and RTOs[9]:

1. Management and Operations Activities:

   - Monitoring and reporting to the European Commission. This should include at minima: (i) the IPCEI project deliverables - including the new solutions developed and industrially deployed - their impacts, uptake and timing, (ii) the key performance indicators associated to each of the IPCEI-CIS project spill-over activities; (iii) the sustainability performance and security features of both the integrated IPCEI project and each of the IPCEI projects and; (iv) macro-project[10] outcomes where applicable.

   - Where necessary, risk mitigation activities to guarantee effective and timely delivery and reuse of all the IPCEI-CIS project deliverables.

   - The necessary ICT tools to (i) allow secure and effective collaborative activities with non-IPCEI participants and; (ii) guarantee external communication activities.

   - Support the IPCEI ex-ante application process and alignment of the assessment process of potential new participants after the start of the IPCEI-CIS activities.

2. Sustainability Activities:

   - Support the development of the medium-term sustainability strategy and governance of the pre-notified IPCEI in collaboration with the governmental Authorities participating in the IPCEI-CIS and the European Commission.
   - Develop joint approaches to ensure that project results stemming from the IPCEI-CIS (such as open-source software technologies) will be

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[5]   A European Green Deal, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

[6]   European industrial strategy, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en

[7]   Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en

[8]   European data strategy, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-data-strategy_en

[9]   In complement to the activities of the IPCEI-CIS as such in these three fields.

[10] Macro-projects under the IPCEI-CIS aim to provide a deeper level of European integration to commonly achieve the objectives of the integrated project, by delivering common results, products or services.

maintained and regularly updated and that economic viability of the solutions will happen.

3. Dissemination and Exploitation Activities:
   - Strategically support the pre-notified IPCEI-CIS main dissemination and exploitation activities to reach scale in particular towards the non-IPCEI participants, including in preparatory activities, organization, logistics and content materials for each of its key events and meetings
   - Foster transparency of the pre-notified IPCEI-CIS activities and wide uptake of the new innovative cloud-to-edge solutions to be first industrially deployed that all interested stakeholders have regular access to up to data information by for example preparing social media content, to regularly and at large scale communicate about the status and content of the IPCEI-CIS new deployed solutions.

Outcomes and deliverables

Outcomes:

- Strengthen the competitiveness and innovativeness of the European industrial economy fit for the twin digital and green transition.

- Accelerate the exploitation and uptake of advanced, secure, sustainable and strategic cloud-to-edge capabilities among the 27 Member States and their ecosystems of industrial and research and technological companies.

- Sustain and guarantee the viability of the IPCEI solutions during and beyond the IPCEI lifetime cycle.

Deliverables:

The Cloud IPCEI Exploitation Office should provide at minima:

Management and Operations Activities:
   - Building on data collection from IPCEI-CIS participants, provide yearly activity management plans for the planned IPCEI-CIS including key project deliverables, milestones, fulfilment of requirements under the Digital Compass and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, risk mitigation measures and a description of roles and responsibilities in form of a RACI[11] matrix.
   - Set-up and management of (i) a dedicated Cloud IPCEI Exploitation Office's website and (ii) the necessary ICT communication tools including a collaborative platform accessible to enhance collaboration between IPCEI participants and non-participant.

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[11] RACI stands for Role, Accountable, Consulted and Informed

Sustainability Activities:

- Develop a medium-term sustainability roadmap for the developed solutions as part of the planned IPCEI-CIS with the support of the IPCEI participants.
- Propose a governance strategy to guarantee the self-functioning of the IPCEI integrated project.

Dissemination and Exploitation Activities:
- Develop and rollout a dissemination and exploitation strategy including yearly social media campaigns and content to further support the uptake of the IPCEI cloud-to-edge solutions across all interested stakeholders.
- Organise targeted and complementary events, industrial sessions, reports, activities to the ones of the IPCEI-CIS to further foster the exploitation and dissemination of the IPCEI cloud-to edge solutions towards non participants.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

- Yearly number of IPCEI cloud-to-edge result exploited.

- Number of yearly IPCEI Exploitation Office's social media campaigns and content produced.

- Number of total participants to events, activities organised by the IPCEI Exploitation Office per: (a) IPCEI participants and (b) non IPCEI-participants.
- Yearly environmental impact of the IPCEI-CIS at aggregated level.

Targeted stakeholders

The consortium can be structured around public or/and private organisations, used to conduct complex and large coordination and management work with public authorities and private organisations, to monitoring of technical deployments (including security and sustainability aspects), and that are capable to demonstrate a good technical, economic, and policy understanding in cloud and edge computing in a European setting. Professional activity of each of the consortia member must be conducted in full independence from the one of a governmental authority and must be separated from the activities conducted under the IPCEI-CIS.

Type of action and funding rate

Coordination and Support Actions — 100% funding rate

- ℹ For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply *(see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)*

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply *(see section 6)*

- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies depreciation only (see section 10)

– The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:

  o Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance

DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC – Highly Secure Collaborative Platform for Aeronautics and Security Industry

Objectives

The objective is to develop a commercially viable highly secure cloud-based collaborative platform for the management of sensitive multi-country industrial initiatives in the aeronautics and security sector, including civil security. This platform will allow the development of highly sensitive industrial projects, from design to production. In particular, the platform should be able to support the development of products and services financed under future calls of the European Defence Fund.

The need for a new platform derives from the very specific requirements from the aeronautics and security sector. Over the years, the European industry in general has embraced several paradigm changes resulting from new ICT capabilities: collaborative platforms, co-design, concurrent engineering, decentralised and multi-supplier collaboration, the virtualisation of software and hardware, etc. But the aeronautics and security sector has only embraced such changes with caution, if at all. This is due inter alia to different national standards for the classification of data, complex user-access requirements or justified localisation obligations for data infrastructures, typically on the grounds of public security. Such situation has become untenable and seriously undermines the sector's competitiveness against other world's regions, not the least against an international context that implies the multiplication of multi-country and multi-stakeholders' projects

Scope

The highly secure collaborative platform should:
- Allow the aeronautics and security sector to reach a similar level of decentralised/distributed working along its supply chain in the same way as other sectors already enjoy it today (e.g. the automotive sector).
- Be cloud-native or in its defect, cloud-based (i.e. deployable and operated from a highly-secure cloud infrastructure), as opposed to on-premise[12] software.
- Provide for a broad range of secure and user-friendly collaborative tools including general purpose collaboration tools (messaging, wikis, file sharing, videoconferencing, chat) as well as more advanced tools (computer-assisted design, product lifecycle management, data analysis, …).

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[12] On-premise refers to data infrastructures that the user has to operate itself

- Provide for a stack as deep as needed to cater for the specificities of the aeronautics and security sector, including, where applicable, at IaaS and PaaS levels.
- Cater for state-of-the-art security, interoperability, reversibility, sovereignty and sustainability standards.
- Allow for the concurrent management of different industrial programmes without the need to duplicate the platform (for each programme/country/contractor/etc).
- Be anchored in the security requirements specific to the aeronautics and security sector.
- Cater at minima for the specific needs of information classified at the level of RESTRICTED and equivalents (cf. equivalence table in Council Decision 2013/488/EU and Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444), and allow ad-hoc segregation to handle specific national needs or requirements. To the extent possible, the collaborative platform should provide sufficient safeguards and security mechanisms so that physical segregation of data is no longer required.
- Incorporate, where appropriate, the outcome of a possible process for defining an EU-level single set of rules and accreditation for data sharing in the aeronautic and security sector.
- Allow for the evolution over-time of the platform, given the very long industrial cycles specific to the aeronautic and security sector (50+ years).
- Allow for multi-cloud tenancy.
- Provide the necessary measures to connect different cloud service offerings with different security and encryption mechanisms.
- Be tested in quasi-real situations, for example by using it in a real co-design situation which, in reality, does not imply particular confidentiality agreements but where hard user access controls are simulated.

The following items fall outside of the scope:
- the provision of the hardware infrastructure to deploy and operate the platform

The consortium should be structured around private stakeholders (typically: software vendors, data infrastructure providers, aeronautic and security stakeholders, cybersecurity stakeholders). However, to maximise its impact, public authorities, in particular Ministries responsible for national security, home affairs and/or defence, should as well integrate the consortium. Higher education entities, and research and technology organisations with demonstrated cooperation with the above-mentioned public/private stakeholders could also join the consortium where they can make a distinct contribution to the development of the envisaged platform.

Outcomes and deliverables

- A commercially viable highly-secure cloud-based collaborative platform, for the management of industrial programmes in the aeronautics and security sector.

- The governance model and impact that the operations of such a platform would have on the sector, notably how such platform can be operated,

deployed, and accessed, as well as how projects can be managed throughout their lifecycle.

– A significant contribution to the discussions for an EU-level single set of rules and accreditation for data sharing in the aeronautics and security sector.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

– Number of secured and common integrated services and applications as well as the associated level of integration and interoperability. The goal is to measure whether an end-to-end collaboration, covering the different phases of the design systems lifecycle, is achieved.

– Number of country scenarios supported, taking into consideration that each country may have different national security requirements that need to be fulfilled.

– Vendor neutrality, which shall allow to deploy the platform on multiple cloud-based infrastructures without changing the source code of the platform (e.g. by using current approaches such as Infrastructure-as-Code)

Targeted stakeholders

The consortium can be composed of public and /or private entities, covering the complete supply chain from software vendors, cloud infrastructure providers, research and technology organizations, to aeronautics and security stakeholders, including public authorities. All members shall be able to demonstrate a good understanding of the specificities of the aeronautics and security sector and in spite of that are able to extend and exploit the envisaged platform for other relevant sectors (e.g. mobility).

Type of action and funding rate

Simple Grants — 50% funding rate
ℹ️ For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

Specific topic conditions

– For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply (see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)

– For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (see section 6)

– For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: full costs only (see section 10)

– For this topic, first exploitation obligations apply (see section 10)

– The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:

  o extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance

o extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects

DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-ICU-DATA – Federated European Infrastructure for Intensive Care Units' (ICU) data

Objectives

The action will establish and deploy a pan-European federated infrastructure for Intensive Care Units' (ICU) data combined with governance mechanisms allowing secure cross-border access and use of ICU datasets, related tools and resources. The infrastructure shall primarily address data from acute and intensive care, including data generated from physiological monitors, laboratory investigations, imaging, clinical examination and examination protocols, and therapeutics as well as from emerging omics technologies used during care delivery. It shall be used by clinicians, researchers and innovators with the aim of more precise, faster,more effective clinical decision-making, diagnostics, personalised treatment and predictive medicine. This infrastructure shall allow for both observational and interventional research and innovation to occur at pan-European level, also in preparation for future pandemics.

The ICU data infrastructure shall be supported by advanced corresponding IT tools, capacities and resources in terms of data capture, processing, analysis and visualisation, with inherent interoperability and connectivity, enabling secure access to and distributed analysis of datasets, including AI use. In addition, it should support the exchange of best practices with a fast-track approach for addressing emerging need, such as in case of a pandemic. Finally, it shall be supported by a corresponding package for digital skills training and education that is fit for the purpose for this scope.

Scope

The awarded action will support the deployment of the infrastructure needed to link and enable access and exploration of the fragmented European databases of ICUs on acute care, intensive care and telemedicine, complemented by a solid, clear and sustainable governance and business model for gathering data, models and best practice, and its exploitation by public and private organisations towards clear benefits for health communities and society. It will provide a harmonised approach for accessing acute care-related data and linking it with other health data sources enabling data discovery and reuse for researchers, innovators, clinicians, AI and data tool developers. The action should contribute to supporting decision-making and improving patient care in the ICUs, through better short-term prediction and earlier identification of critical clinical status of patients, including for infectious diseases. It will also facilitate chronic and inherent risk factor identification, including for cancer. The action shall also establish a basis for data intensive computational model-based tools for decision support and risk prevention, towards a "virtual twin of an ICU patient".

The action shall address the interoperability requirements so that communication and exchange of data and information within and between ICUs is fully enabled. The proposal shall identify flexible common data models, core sets of standardized data

elements and anonymisation strategies, and be in full compliance with the principles of GDPR, patient privacy, as well as accordance with the FAIR principles[13]. The work shall be based on common data models, interoperability mechanisms, intra- and inter-EU national collaborative exchange of data and knowledge including teleconsultations and synoptic near real-time sharing of clinical data to account for the urgency to treat. The action shall set up a federated infrastructure of ICU data in Europe, to facilitate development of short-term predictive models, better decision support tools and model (incl. AI)-based risk prevention tools helping intensivists in their work. A particular focus should be on demonstrating integration and use of datasets collected in ICUs in a standardised manner with "virtual twin" computational models of human patho-physiology.

The action is expected to engage with ICU centres and relevant stakeholders in all EU Member States and regions with a view to increasing the representativeness of the ICU data sources vis-à-vis the European population, disease areas and clinical domains covered, and sufficient quantity and quality of data for research and innovation. The action shall promote the effective implementation and evaluation of data-driven systems in acute and intensive Care. Implementation should be ICU practitioner-centred and designed according to the needs of users, notably the health workforce providing care in practical terms and taking clinical pathways and continuity of care into account. Use incentives must be considered and added value demonstrated in terms of process improvement or innovation and better outcomes.

The resulting data infrastructure should be aligned with developments under the European Health Data Space (EHDS). It should be interoperable with other building blocks and components of the EHDS, the federated European infrastructures for genomics data and cancer imaging data, and the EDITH Coordination and Support Action on the European Virtual Human Twin. The work should build on and bring forward the results accomplished in relevant Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects and the Digital Europe Programme. It should engage and coordinate with the relevant actions of the health cluster of the Digitizing European Industries (DEI) initiative, European Reference Networks and the ongoing cooperation of ICU Hubs among Member States and regions with a view to establishing and fostering interoperability, harmonisation and standardisation.

The awarded project(s) will use, in so far as it is possible, the smart cloud-to-edge middleware platform Simpl[14], and have to work in partnership with the Data Spaces Support Centre deployed under the first WP[15] in order to ensure alignment with the rest of the ecosystem of data spaces implemented with the support of Digital Europe Programme. The joint work will target the definition of:

- the data space reference architecture, building blocks and common toolboxes to be used;

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[13] Findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable. https://doi.org/10.1038/sdata.2016.18

[14] See https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/simpl-cloud-edge-federations-and-data-spaces-made-simple

[15] Project implementing the topic 2.2.2.1 from the Commission Decision C(2021) 7914 final, adopting the Main Digital Europe Work Programme for 2021-2022

- the common standards, including semantic standards and interoperability protocols, both domain-specific and cross-cutting;
- the data governance models, business models and strategies for running data spaces.

Outcomes and deliverables

- Deployment of an interoperable and secure federated infrastructure for trusted ICU datasets in the EU, with established interoperable links to other federated European data infrastructures, such as on cancer-imaging and genomics.
- Secure and interoperable platform linked to AI resources for aggregation of ICU datasets for secondary analysis and development of tools with relevant datasets for different treatment types, useful for developing clinically relevant AI algorithms for specific use cases, including test and training data sets ("atlas" of anonymized Acute Care cases);
- Demonstration of computational modelling tools, fully interoperable with ICU datasets, for individual ICU patient patho-physiology simulation and analysis using ICU related clinical information (including decision-support tools), clinical consultation, collaboration and monitoring.
- Platform and mechanisms to exchange best clinical practice, adapted analysis methodologies and training datasets, also in case of an emerging health threat event, such as a pandemic.
- User interface front-end module or system at the clinical workforce level operational in a minimum of four EU languages. Design and development in co-creation with the clinical workforce with demonstrated improvement in the provision of care: processes, documentation, quality control including new, adapted or extended ICU data sources including annotation, voice recognition, integrated datasets.
- A sustainable operational coordination and governance structure, open to the involvement of new stakeholders, including capacity building measures necessary to ensure the establishment, sustainable operation and successful uptake of the infrastructure with the aim of establishing an entity under European law.
- A business model including an uptake strategy explaining the motivation and incentives for all stakeholders at the different levels (regional, national, European, global) to support the data infrastructure towards its sustainability, including data controllers, data users, service providers, healthcare workforce, systems and public authorities at large and taking into account the role of SMEs in the deployment and the value chain.
- A training and skills programme capturing the interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter and enabling the sustainable development, integration and use with a strong orientation towards innovation, patient-centred health and a better quality of life for citizens and society.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

Proposals are expected to set clear, pertinent targets and define measurement methods for all measurable outcomes and deliverables. At least the following KPIs must be defined:

- number of different ICU databases connected to the European ICU data infrastructure – at least 15 from at least 10 different eligible countries by the end of the project;

- number of registered users (including for example researchers, healthcare professionals, clinicians, innovators) actively accessing the European ICU data infrastructure in operation and utilising its resources – at least 100 by the end of the project;

- volume and number of data points, as well as types of ICU datasets and corresponding patient information accessible through the European ICU infrastructure by the end of the project;

- demonstration of ICU datasets integration and use with "virtual human twin" multi-scale, multi-disciplinary computational models in at least 4 (four) different clinical domains, including for example infectious diseases, cancer, cardiovascular disease, brain disorders, with clear evidence of enabling computational model-based tool development and validation in these domains by the end of the project.

Targeted stakeholders

The consortium can include public and private entities such as (but not limited to): hospital organisations, universities, research organisations, industry, SMEs, IT solution providers, governmental authorities (at national, regional, local level).

Type of action and funding rate

Simple Grants — 50% funding rate
ℹ️ For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply (see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (see section 6)

- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation only (see section 10)

- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:

  o extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union

  o extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance

  o extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects

DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-GENOME – Genome of Europe

Objectives

The Genome of Europe (GoE) is a multi-country project aiming to establish and launch a European reference genome database of genetic variation obtained by whole genome sequencing (WGS) for at least 500,000 citizens, eventually, based on population-based national reference genome collections, collectively representative of the European population. A concerted genome sequencing effort is necessary to achieve such a critical mass of WGS data across Europe. By fostering it, this action is expected to bring major efficiencies due to economies of scale and should enable all GoE countries to contribute with WGS data. It will also ensure consistent application of agreed common data requirements and quality measures across all national datasets, enabling the creation of a high-value European reference dataset.

This action supports the implementation of the Genome of Europe and contributes to achieving the objectives and long-term ambition of the 1+Million Genomes (1+MG) initiative. The objective is also to support the initiative taking into account the potential creation of a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium (EDIC).

Scope

The focus of the action is on whole genome sequencing at clinical grade depth necessary for clinical application. This can be achieved by coordinated WGS sequencing expected to enable massive new data collection in all GoE countries. WGS data for the GoE must be generated following the 1+MG Trust Framework that brings together a set of minimal recommendations to enable secure crossborder access to genomic data in Europe, in particular as regards ethical and legal aspects, data standards, data quality and technical inter-operability. To this end, sequencing specifications should follow the available 1+MG guidance and align closely with that initiative.

The biological samples needed to generate the data, i.e., to sequence the genomes, can either originate from existing population-based cohorts and national biobanks, or be collected from participants recruited specifically for the national and European GoE reference databases. The participants will be selected at the national level to be representative of the respective population, including a contribution of relevant minorities. To ensure uniform approach, the exact inclusion and selection principles need to be agreed at the European GoE level, where sufficient representativeness of the data for the European population is to be ensured.

In parallel to data generating activities (WGS sequencing), the architecture, hardware and software necessary to aggregate and sustain the national reference databases and a European reference database (The Genome of Europe) need to be designed, developed and implemented in cooperation with the Genomic Data Infrastructure (GDI) project. As well as newly generated GoE data, this should ensure effective integration of available national population-based WGS collections established before or independently of the GoE. Once the Genome of Europe is established, it is expected to support several use cases, including for example personalised medicine, patient-focused comparative analysis in clinical settings (e.g. for cancer and rare diseases), descriptive population genetics for Europe and by sub-population, calibration of polygenic risk scores for common and complex diseases, imputation reference panel for genome-wide association studies. The system should also have the capacity for further extension towards the targets of the GoE project.

For data security reasons, sample transport, all WGS activities and genomic data transfer and storage must take place within the territory of eligible countries. Data security at all stages of the data lifecycle must be ensured.

Legal and ethical issues must be duly considered, e.g. as regards personal data protection, ethnic minorities, involvement of minors, and incidental findings. Informed consents, if applicable, should cover both the primary use (reference genome) and re-use (data access through the 1+MG data infrastructure for research, healthcare and public health policy purposes). Active citizen engagement, communication activities and capacity building measures are expected to ensure public acceptance and trust necessary for the success of the GoE project as a whole.

The GoE project forms an integral part of 1+MG. GoE data will be accessible via the European federated genomics data infrastructure (GDI) deployed under the Digital Europe topic DIGITAL-2021-CLOUD-AI-01-FEI-DS-GENOMICS.

Besides Digital Europe's Data Spaces, the topic is also synergetic with the RRF support for the GoE multi-country project as stipulated in the national recovery and resilience plans of several Member States. Cooperation with other relevant European initiatives, and due consideration of other projects and infrastructures, for example those funded under the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe research and innovation programmes and the EU4Health Programme (e.g. CAN.HEAL - Genomics for Public Health), will be strongly recommended to build on and bring forward their results as well as to ensure a good use of synergies and complementarities.

Outcomes and deliverables

- Joint or coordinated sequencing (WGS), as described under Scope.
- New WGS data for a large representative sample of representative European citizens, generated in accordance with the guidance, specifications and standards agreed within 1+MG (1+MG Trust Framework). Phenotypic information should be collected/integrated to an extent required for the intended use cases; broader phenotyping should be actively encouraged for a greater furure impact.
- Integration of eligible population-based WGS data generated independently of the GoE and made available to the project (including the associated phenotypic information).
- The Genome of Europe federated reference database established and accessible through the federated European genomic data infrastructure.
- Documentation elaborating on the relevant ethical and legal issues, including a Data Protection Impact Assessment and ethics assurance approaches.
- Communication material necessary to inform citizens in the context of new data collection and re-consenting, e.g. information sheets presenting the project to relevant personas (why data are collected, who will have access, how it will be used and secured, what will be the benefits for society and the individual) and (re-)consent form templates.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

Proposals are expected to set clear, pertinent targets and define measurement methods for all measurable outcomes and deliverables. At least the following KPIs must be defined and achieved by the end of the project:

- number of different national reference genome databases connected – at least 10 from at least 10 different eligible countries;

- number of whole genome sequences with the corresponding phenotypic information included in the European reference genome – for at least 100.000 (hundred thousand) citizens;
- European reference genome established by integrating the information contained in the national reference genome databases and ready for use in at least 2 (two) different use cases supported by appropriate software, as further described under Scope.

Targeted stakeholders

Public and private entities such as (but not limited to): public administrations (national, regional and local level), hospitals, research institutes, biobanks, research agencies, research infrastructures.

Type of action and funding rate

Simple Grants — 50% funding rate

- For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

Specific topic conditions

− For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply (see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)

− For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (see section 6)

− For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation only (see section 10)

− The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:

  o extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union

  o extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance

  o extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects

DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-COORDINATEF – Coordination of AI Sectorial Testing and Experimental Facilities

Objectives

The Coordination and support action (CSA) grant will support the sectorial Testing and Experimentation Facilities (TEFs) created under the WP 2021-2022 (Health, Manufacturing, Agri-Food, Smart Cities and Communities) and the future new ones to be created under the Digital Europe Programme, to develop complementary cross-TEF activities in providing AI services from a cross-sector perspective, to maximise the overall impact of TEFs in their ambitions of achieving world-class excellence and to help the sectorial TEFs to better link with relevant EU projects, initiatives and stakeholders in the AI ecosystem of excellence. By boosting the reinforcing feedback loops, the CSA will also bolster the sectorial TEF's and the ecosystem's sustainability.

Once the sectorial TEFs funded under the 2021 call are established, it is necessary to coordinate the TEFs with other actions launched in the Digital Europe Programme (in particular the European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs), data spaces, the AI-on-demand platform, and, as relevant, the cloud and HPC initiatives and the edge AI TEF) and to develop a strong ecosystem around the TEFs enabling a faster and growing adoption of AI technologies in the European market.

Scope
- The CSA will help develop synergies and exchanges between the TEFs, and with other relevant projects, such as the EDIHs, data spaces, network of excellence research centres, and other actions funded e.g. under DEP and Horizon Europe, AI-on-demand platform, and the community at large.
- It will establish, as appropriate, strong links with Edge to Cloud and relevant HPC actions funded under strategic objective 1 (EuroHPC JU), using when appropriate the SIMPL platform as a connector, and help TEFs to make the most out of all these resources and services.
- It will support the TEFs projects in allowing economies of scales regarding common activities run by the individual TEF projects (e.g., organization of events, access to common resources, mentoring and exchange mechanisms among TEFs, integration with 3rd party services and other EU funded projects, etc.) and exchanges of best practices across all TEFs to reinforce and optimize efficiency and cooperation.
- It will support TEFs to help companies using their services to comply with the AI Act. This could be through regulatory sandboxes, standards, certifications, labelling schemes, assessment of transparency of AI systems and collaboration with public authorities, depending on what TEF themselves offer and what additional or complementary support to the TEF users is needed.
- It will support all sectorial TEFs in their dissemination activities towards innovators and sectorial users to maximise the impact of the sectorial TEFs, maximising their visibility and attractiveness for innovators. Special attention should be on coordinating mentoring and twinning programmes for innovators in order to foster fair and balanced participation and potential expansion of TEFs activities across Europe to complement and reinforce the on-going TEFs.
  One key activity of the CSA is to put in place efficient mechanisms to maximise the visibility of AI & robotics in Europe, building on technologies tested in TEFs and targeting technology and sectorial audiences, with a clear focus on real world applicability.
- Support and coordination with regards to co-funding instruments, helping all sectorial TEFs in common approaches towards Member States including support and exchange of best practices in the implementation and reporting requirements imposed by state-aid rules, contractual requirements, interpretation of the Grant Agreements etc.
- Act as facilitator for cooperation with the AI-on-demand platform. Foster contribution from TEFs and channelling TEFs needs towards the AI-on-demand platform.
- Facilitate coordination with the edge AI TEF, as appropriate. For instance, solutions developed and tested in the former could be later integrated and tested in the sectorial TEFs.

- The CSA will establish the necessary resources to help and support all sectorial TEFs in their coordinated go-to-market approach, including but not limited to sustainability plans, sale strategies, price lists, etc.
- Facilitate exchanges with EDIHs national competence centres, and relevant channels (e.g. national initiatives, chambers of commerce or professional network) to maximise the opportunities offered e.g., to maximise the outreach of the sectorial TEFs to regions across Europe.
- Support the European Commission in the monitoring of existing TEFs, assessing progress and providing recommendations for their implementation and drawing lessons for policy-making.

Outcomes and deliverables

Outcomes:

The Coordination and support action for the sectorial Testing and Experimentation Facilities is part of the strategy to bring technology from the lab to the market. It should contribute to the TEF's objectives to mobilise the necessary actors of the ecosystem, to ensure the readiness of both the supply and demand sides in the area of AI-enabled services and deliver the main elements needed to scale up the adoption of AI-based services in sectors addressed by the TEFs.

In terms of the ecosystem of AI excellence around TEFs, expected outcomes include:

- Support all the TEFs for bringing AI-based technologies from Lab to Fab.

- A homogenous approach in terms of service offer and service level across all TEFs, to the extent possible.

- Increased awareness of all sectorial TEFs by relevant players in the AI and robotics community, in particular innovators.

- Closer cooperation with relevant players in the European AI ecosystems, including the EDIHs, data spaces, the AI-on-demand platform, the edge AI TEF, relevant cloud and HPC initiatives.

- Closer cooperation with authorities to set up regulatory sandboxes.

Deliverables:

- Action plan organised along different domains: technological, business models, skills development, dissemination, legal aspects, outreach, etc., to develop links and synergies with EDIHs, data spaces, edge AI TEF, network of AI research excellence centres, HPC, and the AI-on-demand platform.

- A catalogue of common resources and services across the TEFs.

- Joint dissemination and communication plan with all sectorial TEFs on their activities and services, to be implemented within the project duration.

- A specialised support unit to coordinate co-funding instruments, including regular interactions with Member State's administrations, addressing coherently requirements from the Grant Agreements.

- Technical mechanisms for a seamless exchange of assets with the AI-on-Demand platform. Delivery of individual and targeted sectorial sections within the platform, facilitating market reach for the innovations successfully tested in the TEFs (distributed model).

- A specialised business consultancy unit focussing on business and go-to-market strategy, optimising TEF business sustainability.

- Periodic impact assessment and road-mapping: collection and analysis of the key performance indicators (KPI) defined for the TEFs and sharing of good practices and lessons learnt.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables
- Impact of common communication campaigns across all relevant sectors.
- Number/size of the mentoring/twinning programs for innovators
- Number of common resources and services across the TEFs, and impact on the overall TEFs' offer.
- Efficiency gain (qualitative or quantitative) in TEFs in offering centralised support for common activities.
- Number of exchanges with other relevant initiatives (e.g.: EDIHs, national competence centres).
- Number of regulatory sandboxes set up by sectorial TEFs that received support by the CSA.
- Number of total assets enabled in the AI-on-demand platform.

Targeted stakeholders

The consortium should include a relevant representation of all the sectorial TEFs selected from the 1st call of the Digital Europe Programme, to ensure that the selected CSA optimally support their coordination. These organisations will be subject to Article 12(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/694. The consortium should be ready to serve future sectorial TEFs.

The proposal should provide a broad representation of constituencies relevant to AI and robotics. The consortium as a whole should demonstrate the necessary experience/expertise to reach the objectives of the call and demonstrate the capacity to reach out to and effectively engage with relevant stakeholders within Europe, including other EC and member states initiatives and organisms of the European AI ecosystem (e.g.: EDIHs, AI-on-demand platform).

Type of action and funding rate

Coordination and Support Actions — 100% funding rate.

For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

Specific topic conditions
- For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply (see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (see section 6)

- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation and full cost for listed equipment (see section 10)

- For this topic, first exploitation obligations apply (see section 10)

- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:

  o Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union

- o Extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance
- o Extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects

DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-DEVELOPCITI – Developing CitiVerse

Objectives

Digital technologies are shaping our society, supporting full digitalisation processes, efficiency, and sustainability gains in many domains.

New services such as virtual worlds will have a profound impact on the way people will interact.

A CitiVerse (virtual worlds for citizens) can be composed of a series of interconnected distributed virtual worlds representing their physical counterparts and synchronized at a specified frequency and fidelity. Those virtual worlds can offer certain kinds of virtual goods/services (e.g. administrative, economic, social and cultural online activities) and virtual environments (e.g. game scenes, online fora or virtual cities) to citizens and other users represented as digital avatars. User-centric activities in the CitiVerse ecosystem and content creation will be key elements to support social acceptability and trust. CitiVerses could be used by citizens avatars to navigate and discover both public, private, cultural, historical, or touristic digital and physical assets. Businesses will be able to offer innovative and circular services related to shopping, tourism or entertainment while local authorities and communities can improve their sustainability and resilience by managing their infrastructure, make decisions on urban planning and mobility allowing an active citizens participation in co-design of community policies.

European industry, including the wealth of European SMEs active in technologies relevant for virtual worlds and in content creation, will contribute to its development, taking the leadership in an area rich of possibilities. The action will also contribute to building an active and thriving ecosystem of EU SMEs and larger companies. It could also integrate the values described in the Living-in.eu declaration[16] and principles of the New European Bauhaus initiative.[17] The action should also explore links and synergies with the Climate-neutral and smart cities Mission, and in particular to selected Mission cities, when identifying use cases as well as with the European Artificial Intelligence and Robotics Testing and Experimentation Facility for Smart and Sustainable Cities and Communities.

The action will implement the CitiVerse concept by building on the smart communities' data infrastructure that is developed under WP2021-22 and WP23-24. The objective is to bring EU CitiVerse industry, including SMEs, together in developing the different layers and technical components of virtual worlds useful for local

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[16] https://living-in.eu/
[17] The New European Bauhaus: beautiful, sustainable, together. (europa.eu)

authorities and citizens. The project(s) stemming from this action will seek synergies with existing and future initiatives in the field.

The action could build on existing local digital twins and smart communities' data infrastructure expanding their capabilities and further shifting to eXtended Reality.
One or more projects, led by the industry in cooperation with one or more EU communities, will introduce virtual world technology to allow citizens and other stakeholders to «navigate and interact» in their community spaces. This could range from basic 'default' sensory experiences all the way to digital asset-enhanced overlays. This will create a steady and immersive environment for citizens and businesses, a CitiVerse, that can be used for virtual/real spatial planning, management or navigation while also enhancing the social, architectural, green, and cultural heritage dimension of living spaces.

The proposed solutions will be developed in real-life use cases from cities and communities. Use cases will span from hybrid systems to fully-fledged virtual worlds created on top of real-life ecosystems and populated with new and existing data coming from various data sources, notably from the EU data spaces such as the smart cities and communities, but also from other public and private sources.

This topic will be subject to Article 12(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/694 for the following reasons: The CitiVerse will help operating security and data critical sectors (e.g., energy supply and consumption, water management, waste management, traffic information). Furthermore, the tools and technologies involved will have to handle sensitive data (including citizens' data) and should therefore be built embedding security by design. Moreover, the tools will be used in activities that are closely linked to the functioning of the public sector and its interaction with citizens (e.g. these tools can have a role in local elections or issuing advice to citizens in crisis situations).

Using Article 12(6) will provide continuity with earlier actions. The action under this topic will develop virtual world solutions that could further exploit the potential of the European data space for smart communities, for which Article 12(6) was used in the previous WP21-22. The solutions could also be used to complement the Local Digital Twins toolbox that was called for with Article 12(6) in the previous WP21-22.

Scope

In particular, the action will:

- Develop open solutions for a CitiVerse to offer interoperable and sustainable services, ranging from concrete technologies and platforms to use cases for citizens, businesses, and community planners.
- Take into account the European Interoperability Framework for Smart Cities and Communities (EIF4SCC)[18].
- Be compatible with the evolving framework for Living-in.eu Minimal Interoperability Mechanisms MIMs Plus[19] and reuse the blueprint of the Data

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[18] https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/other_staff_working_paper_en_v2_p1_2249550.pdf
[19] https://living-in.eu/sites/default/files/files/MIMs-Plus-LI.EU-Tech-Specs-v5.pdf

Space for Smart and Sustainable Cities and Communities (DS4SSCC)[20], the Local Digital Twins (LDTs) Toolbox[21], and other technologies and components developed by relevant projects around smart communities and local digital twins.

- Ensure that EU values such as openness, inclusion, accessibility, privacy and sustainability are preserved by the proposed solutions.
- Test the open solutions through a series of real-life use cases. To this end, the project(s) will develop and roll-out concrete CitiVerse use cases (and combinations of them).
- Cover areas described above and ensure citizens participation through virtual world technologies such as eXtended Reality (including VR/AR). Use cases could also cover the pilot areas detailed in the call text[22] from the deployment of the Data space for smart communities (topic 2.2.1.2.2 of this Work Programme).
- Develop or exploit existing AI algorithms to improve the CitiVerse ecosystem at any level, such as but not exclusively to improve immersive experience, latency, users' operation and 3D simulation and modelling.
- Apply complex algorithmics (based on complexity science modelling) where relevant, e.g., for use cases involving long-term policy testing with the active participation of citizens.
- Engage with relevant EU industrial partners, including SMEs, in Member States to provide technology capacity for the CitiVerse, including but not limited to the VR/AR Industrial Coalition[23] and the New European Bauhaus initiative.
- If relevant, exploit existing open building visualization solutions and multi-dimensional models to implement CitiVerse use cases.
- Exploit the long tradition of Europe in cultural and media content, involving European content creators, in particular SMEs, in the design of engaging in immersive CitiVerse environments.
- Work towards policy recommendations for a robust, open, and interoperable CitiVerse legal framework compatible with EU values and laws.
- Include security by design for the CitiVerse solutions and their application in real-life use cases.

Outcomes and deliverables

The action will result in one or more projects proposing varied use cases for the CitiVerse. Such project(s) may be focusing on the same pilot areas envisaged by the EU Smart Communities data space project (call 3 [DIGITAL-2022-CLOUD-AI-03-DS-SMART][24]), although focus on other areas is also possible.

The project(s) should also propose a roadmap to expand CitiVerse solutions in Europe using MIM Plus-compatible standards and EU technology solutions and make recommendations for interoperable and open CitiVerse platforms in line with EU values and policy landscape.

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[20] Data Space for Smart and Sustainable Cities and Communities - DS4SSCC
[21] Topic 2.2.1.2.3 in DIGITAL Europe Work Programme 2021-2022
[22] Funding and tender opportunities - call-fiche_digital-2022-cloud-ai-03_en.pdf (europa.eu)
[23] The Virtual and Augmented Reality Industrial Coalition | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)
[24] Funding and tender opportunities - https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/digital/wp-call/2022/call-fiche_digital-2022-cloud-ai-03_en.pdf

The project(s) may result in a set of CitiVerse open solutions compatible with MIMs Plus, and may re-use the blueprint from DS4SSCC and the LDTs Toolbox. The CitiVerse solutions should be structured and touch upon the following technological areas as the baseline: architecture and infrastructure, and software for user's interfaces, interoperability, security and protection, accessibility, and sustainability, applications, and services.

CitiVerse use cases should be deployed for at least 12 months and include both private (e.g. technology providers including SMEs) and public actors (e.g. cities, relevant public authorities, regions) in at least 3 EU or Associated countries.

Finally, the project(s) will provide a roadmap with clear action points to bring to maturity and address the sustainability, market readiness (including pre-standardisation aspects) of the tested CitiVerse open solutions.

<u>KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables</u>

- Number and identification of CitiVerse solutions using MIMs Plus-compatible solutions.
- Number and identification of the different use cases addressed.
- Number and identification of the different Local Digital Twins expanded.
- Number and identification of recommendations for an interoperable and open CitiVerse platform.
- Number and identification of cities/regions/communities involved in the use cases.
- Number of citizens potentially involved in each use case and in total.

<u>Targeted stakeholders</u>

The consortium should include representatives from the EU public sector at local level and industry. Academia, civil society, and citizens (for example through Citizen Science) are also welcome.

The consortium should include signatories of the Living-in.eu declaration and find synergies with beneficiaries of relevant EU missions in Horizon Europe.

<u>Type of action and funding rate</u>

Simple Grants — 50% funding rate
- ℹ For more information on Digital Europe types of action, see Annex 1.

<u>Specific topic conditions</u>

- For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply *(see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)*

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply *(see section 6)*

- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies - depreciation only *(see section 10)*

- For this topic, first exploitation obligations apply *(see section 10)*

3. Available budget

The available call budget is **EUR 68.000.000**.

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below.

Topic	Topic budget
DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04- IPCEI-EXPLOIT	**EUR 3.000.000**
DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC	**EUR 22.000.000**
DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-ICU-DATA	**EUR 5.000.000**
DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-GENOME	**EUR 20.000.000**
DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-COORDINATEF	**EUR 3.000.000**
DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-DEVELOPCITI	**EUR 15.000.000**

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

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	11 May 2023
Deadline for submission:	26 September 2023 – 17:00:00 CEST (Brussels)
Evaluation:	October-November 2023
Information on evaluation results:	December 2023
GA signature:	June 2024

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 Search Funding & Tenders 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 *(to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded)*

– **mandatory annexes and supporting documents** *(templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*:

  – detailed budget table/calculator: not applicable

  – CVs of core project team: not applicable

  – activity reports of last year: not applicable

  – list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) *(template available in Part B)]*: **applicable for all topics**

  – ownership control declarations **applicable for all topics**

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 the 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**.

Proposals are limited to maximum 70 pages (Part B) **except for Coordination and Support Action where the maximum is 50 pages (Part B)**. Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

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

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

6. Eligibility

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

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

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

– be legal entities (public or private bodies)

– be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:

  – EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))

- non- EU countries:

  - EEA countries (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein)

  - countries associated to the Digital Europe Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature (together 'DEP associated countries', *see* [list of participating countries](#))[25]

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.

Please note that this call is subject to restrictions due to security reasons *(see section 2)*. Therefore, entities must not be directly or indirectly controlled from a country that is not an eligible country. All entities[26] have to fill in and submit a declaration on ownership and control.

Moreover:

- participation in any capacity (as beneficiary, affiliated entity, associated partner, subcontractor or recipient of financial support to third parties) is limited to entities established in eligible countries.

- In addition, in order to be eligible, all participants from associated countries (except EEA countries) and all entities established in the EU or EEA territory but controlled by a third country or third country legal entities (including DEP associated countries), have to present an adequate guarantee approved by their eligible country of establishment, to comply with the conditions set out in the Work Programme Annex 3.

- project activities (included subcontracted work) must take place in eligible countries (see section geographic location below and section 10)

- the Grant Agreement may provide for IPR restrictions (see section 10).

Specific cases

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

International organisations — International organisations are not eligible, unless they are International organisations of European Interest within the meaning of Article 2 of the Digital Europe Regulation (i.e. international organisations the majority of whose members are Member States or whose headquarters are in a Member State).

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

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[25] Proposals including entities from countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement that does not enter into force before the signature of the grant might be declared ineligible. In those cases the consortium will be asked to replace the participant concerned (or redistribute the tasks between the other participants). If this is not possible and the consortium cannot propose any other acceptable solution, the proposal will have to be rejected.

[26] Except for entities that are validated as public bodies by the Central Validation Service.

for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons[27].

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

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'[28]. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations *(see above)* may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

Participation of entities from associated countries in calls subject to restrictions due to security reasons is limited to associated countries that meet specific conditions. A positive assessment of the associated country's capacity to meet these conditions is needed before signature of the grant agreement including entities from these associated countries.]

Following the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16th December 2022, no legal commitments (including the grant agreement itself as well as subcontracts, purchase contracts, financial support to third parties etc.) can be signed with Hungarian public interest trusts established under Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain.

Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals. However, in case the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties). In this case, co-applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities *(e.g. 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] and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05[30])*. 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).

ⓘ For more information, *see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

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[27] See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[28] For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[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] Commission guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by:

for topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-IPCEI-EXPLOIT**:

− A consortium of at least 2 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) and which complies with the following conditions:

− minimum 2 independent entities from 2 different eligible countries

For the topics **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC** and **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-DEVELOPCITI**

− A consortium of at least 3 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) and which complies with the following conditions:

o minimum 3 independent entities from 3 different eligible countries

For the topics **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-ICU-DATA** and **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-GENOME**:

− A consortium of at least 5 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) and which complies with the following conditions:

o Minimum 5 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 5 different eligible countries

For the topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-COORDINATEF**:

− A consortium of at least 4 applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) and which complies with the following conditions:

o Minimum 4 independent applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities) from 3 different eligible countries.

Eligible activities

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

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

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities *(such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc)*.

Financial support to third parties is not allowed

Geographic location (target countries)

Due to restrictions due to security (for all topics):

− the proposals must relate to activities taking place in the eligible countries (see above

Ethics

Projects must comply with:

— highest ethical standards and

— applicable EU, international and national law (including the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679).

Proposals under this call will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific ethics rules (which become part of the Grant Agreement in the form of ethics deliverables, *e.g. ethics committee opinions/notifications/authorisations required under national or EU law*).

For proposals involving development, testing, deployment, use or distribution of AI systems, the ethics review will in particular check compliance with the principles of human agency and oversight, diversity/fairness, transparency and responsible social impact, while the experts performing the technical evaluation will assess the robustness of the AI systems (i.e. their reliability not to cause unintentional harm).

Security

Projects involving EU classified information must undergo security scrutiny to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules (detailed in a security aspects letter (SAL) which is annexed to the Grant Agreement).

These rules (governed by Decision 2015/444[31] and its implementing rules and/or national rules) provide for instance that:

— projects involving information classified TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET (or equivalent) can NOT be funded

— classified information must be marked in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the SAL

— information with classification levels CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/ EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may be:

  — created or accessed only on premises with facility security clearing (FSC) from the competent national security authority (NSA), in accordance with the national rules

  — handled only in a secured area accredited by the competent NSA

  — accessed and handled only by persons with valid personnel security clearance (PSC) and a need-to-know

— at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continue to be protected in accordance with the applicable rules

— action tasks involving EU classified information (EUCI) may be subcontracted only with prior written approval from the granting authority and only to entities established in an EU Member State or in a non-EU country with a security of information agreement with the EU (or an administrative arrangement with the Commission)

— disclosure of EUCI to third parties is subject to prior written approval from the

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[31] See Commission Decision 2015/544/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

granting authority.

Please note that, depending on the type of activity, facility security clearing may have to be provided before grant signature. The granting authority will assess the need for clearing in each case and will establish their delivery date during grant preparation. Please note that in no circumstances can we sign any grant agreement until at least one of the beneficiaries in a consortium has facility security clearing.

Further security recommendations may be added to the Grant Agreement in the form of security deliverables *(e.g. create security advisory group, limit level of detail, use fake scenario, exclude use of classified information, etc)*.

Beneficiaries must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third-country security requirements that could affect implementation or put into question the award of the grant *(e.g. technology restrictions, national security classification, etc)*. The granting authority must be notified immediately of any potential security issues.

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 these 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 'Implementation' 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

− list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

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

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate[32]:

− bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

− in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

− guilty of grave professional misconduct[33] (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

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[32] See Articles 136 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[33] Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

- 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).

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that[34]:

- 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** (composed or 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 (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria *(see sections 7 and 9)* and then ranked according to their scores.

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

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

1) Proposals focusing on a theme that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked proposals will be considered to have the highest priority.

2) The ex aequo proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Implementation'.

3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall proposal portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between proposals, 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.

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[34] See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

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. 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

- Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in section 2

- Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level

- Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the EU*****

- Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*****

2. Implementation

- Maturity of the project

- Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources

- Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work

3. Impact

- Extent to which the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements

- Extent to which the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society

– Extent to which the project addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects **.**

May not be applicable to all topics (see specific topic conditions in section 2).

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	3	5
Implementation	3	5
Impact	3	5
Overall (pass) scores	**10**	**15**

Maximum points: 15 points.

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

Overall threshold: 10 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 1)*. Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration:

– For topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-IPCEI-EXPLOIT**: 36 months

– For topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC**: 36 months

– For topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-COORDINATEF**: 48 months

– For topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-ICU-DATA**: 42 months

– For topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-GENOME**: 42 months

– For topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-DEVELOPCITI**: 30 months

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

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

– **For all topics** except DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-IPCEI-EXPLOIT:

Additional deliverable on dissemination and exploitation, to be submitted in the first six months of the project

– For topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-IPCEI-EXPLOIT:**

Activity reports submitted twice a year for topic.

– for topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC:**

Activity reports to be submitted once a year

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 (maximum grant amount):

– for topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-IPCEI-EXPLOIT**: EUR 3 000 000 per project

– for topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC:** EUR 22 000 000 per project

– for topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-ICU-DATA**: EUR 5 000 000 per project

– for topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-GENOME**: EUR 20 000 000 per project

– for topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-COORDINATEF:** EUR 3 000 000 per project

– for topic **DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-DEVELOPCITI:** Expected budget between EUR 2 000 000 and EUR 5 000 000 per project, although other amounts (up to EUR 15 000 000 are also possible).

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

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. This rate depends on the type of action which applies to the topic *(see section 2)*.

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 and art 6)*.

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.2 Internally invoiced goods and services
- 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 cost[35]: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit costs[36]: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs:
  - depreciation (for topic DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-IPCEI-EXPLOIT, DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04 –ICU-DATA, DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-GENOME, DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-DEVELOPCITI)
  - full cost (for topic DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC)

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[35] 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).

[36] 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).

- depreciation + full cost for listed equipment (for topic DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-COORDINATEF)

- other cost categories:

  - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed

  - internally invoiced goods and services (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices): Yes

- 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 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

  - restrictions due to security:

    - country restrictions for subcontracting costs: Yes, subcontracted work must be performed in the eligible countries (for all topics)

    - eligible cost country restrictions: Yes, only costs for activities carried out in eligible countries are eligible (for all topics)

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 or more **interim payments** (with cost reporting through the use of resources report).

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 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 formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount *(by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc)*. It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us 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.

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)*

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

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

− background and list of background: Yes

− protection of results: Yes

− exploitation of results: Yes

− rights of use on results: Yes

− access to results for policy purposes: Yes

− access to results in case of a public emergency: Yes

− access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: No

− special IPR obligations linked to restrictions due to security:

  − exploitation in eligible countries: yes

  − first exploitation obligation in eligible countries: yes for topics:

    DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-AEROSEC

    DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-COORDINATEF

    DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-AI-04-DEVELOPCITI

  − limitations to transfers and licensing: yes

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

− communication and dissemination plan: Yes

− dissemination of results: Yes

− additional dissemination obligations: No

− additional communication activities: Yes

− special logo: No

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

− specific rules for PAC Grants for Procurement: No

− specific rules for Grants for Financial Support: No

− specific rules for blending operations: No

− special obligations linked to restrictions due to security:

  − implementation in case of restrictions due to security or EU strategic autonomy: Yes

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 Search Funding & Tenders 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 might 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

- − FAQs 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 "Write to us"

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).

- **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).

- **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 double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double 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 to two different EU actions.

- **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).

- **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 a 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 one of them (or it will be rejected).

- **Resubmission —** Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.

- **Rejection —** By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.

- **Cancellation —** There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.

- **Language —** You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*).

- **Transparency —** In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

  This includes:
  - beneficiary names
  - beneficiary addresses
  - the purpose for which the grant was awarded
  - the maximum amount awarded.

  The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection —** The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).

<div align="right">**Annex 1**</div>

<div align="center">**Digital Europe types of action**</div>

The Digital Europe Programme uses the following actions to implement grants:

Simple Grants

Description: Simple Grants (SIMPLE) are a flexible type of action used by a large variety of topics and can cover most activities. The consortium will mostly use personnel costs to implement action tasks, activities with third parties (subcontracting, financial support, purchase) are possible but should be limited.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

SME Support Actions

Description: SME Support Actions (SME) are a type of action primarily consisting of activities directly aiming to support SMEs involved in building up and the deployment of the digital capacities. This type of action can also be used if SMEs need to be in the consortium and make investments to access the digital capacities.

Funding rate: 50% except for SMEs where a rate of 75% applies

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)

Description: Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs) are a small type of action (a typical amount of 1-2 Mio) with the primary goal to support EU policies. Activities can include coordination between different actors for accompanying measures such as standardisation, dissemination, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning exercises and studies, including design studies for new infrastructure and may also include complementary activities of strategic planning, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries.

Funding rate: 100%

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

Grants for Procurement

Description: Grants for Procurement (GP) are a special type of action where the main goal of the action (and thus the majority of the costs) consist of buying goods or services and/or subcontracting tasks. Contrary to the PAC Grants for Procurement *(see below)* there are no specific procurement rules (i.e. usual rules for purchase apply), nor is there a limit to 'contracting authorities/entities'. Personnel costs should be limited in this type of action; they are in general used to manage the grant, coordination between the beneficiaries, preparation of the procurements.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

PAC Grants for Procurement

Description: PAC Grants for Procurement (PACGP) are a specific type of action for procurement in grant agreements by 'contracting authorities/entities' as defined in the EU Public Procurement Directives (Directives 2014/24/EU , 2014/25/EU and 2009/81/EC) aiming at innovative digital goods and services (i.e. novel technologies on the way to commercialisation but not yet broadly available).

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

Grants for Financial Support

Description: Grants for Financial Support (GfS) have a particular focus on cascading grants. The majority of the grant will be distributed via financial support to third parties with special provisions in the grant agreement, maximum amounts to third parties, multiple pre-financing and reporting obligations.

Annex 5 of the model grant agreements foresees specific rules for this type of action regarding conflict of interest, the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management as well as the selection procedure and criteria.

In order to assure the co-financing obligation in the programme, the support to third parties should only cover 50% of third party costs.

Funding rate: 100% for the consortium, co-financing of 50% by the supported third party

Payment model: Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance sub-grants) – payment of the balance

Lump Sum Grants

Description: Lump Sum Grants (LS) reimburse a general lump sum for the entire project and the consortium as a whole. The lump sum is fixed ex-ante (at the latest at grant signature). on the basis of a methodology defined by the granting authority (either on the basis of a detailed project budget or other pre-defined parameters). The lump sum will cover all the beneficiaries' direct and indirect costs for the project. The beneficiaries do not need to report actual costs, they just need to claim the lump sum once the work is done. If the action is not properly implemented only part of the lump sum will be paid.

Funding rate: 100%/50%/50% and 75% (for SMEs)

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s)– final payment

Framework Partnerships (FPAs) and Specific Grants (SGAs)

FPAs

Description: FPAs establish a long-term cooperation mechanism between the granting authority and the beneficiaries of grants. The FPA specifies the common objectives (action plan) and the procedure for awarding specific grants. The specific grants are awarded via identified beneficiary actions (with or without competition).

Funding rate: no funding for FPA

SGAs

Description: The SGAs are linked to an FPA and implement the action plan (or part of it). They are awarded via an invitation to submit a proposal (identified beneficiary action). The consortium composition should in principle match (meaning that only entities that are part of the FPA can participate in an SGA), but otherwise the implementation is rather flexible. FPAs and SGAs can have different coordinators ; other partners of the FPA are free to participate in an SGA or not. There is no limit to the amount of SGAs signed under one FPA.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

<div align="right">**Annex 2**</div>

Eligibility restrictions under Articles 12(5) and (6) and 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation

Security restrictions Article 12(5) and (6)

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, and if justified for security reasons, topics can exclude the participation of legal entities *established* in a third country or DEP associated country, or established in the EU territory but *controlled* by a third country or third country legal entities (including DEP associated countries)[37].

This restriction is applicable for SO1 (High Performance Computing), SO2 (Artificial Intelligence) and SO3 (Cybersecurity), but at different levels.

- In case of SO3, when activated, legal entities established in associated countries and legal entities that are established in the Union but are controlled from third countries are excluded from actions/topics falling under SO 3 (unless otherwise foreseen in the respective Work Programme).

- In case of SO1 and SO2, when activated, legal entities established in associated countries[38] and legal entities that are established in the Union but are controlled from third countries may be eligible to participate only if they comply with the requirements/conditions indicated in the respective Work Programme.

EEA countries are fully associated to the Digital Europe Programme and benefit from a status equivalent to that of the Member States.

The assessment of the foreign control is part of the eligibility criteria. For this, participants will be requested to fill in a self-assessment questionnaire to determine their control status during proposal submission. They will also be requested to submit supporting documents in order for the Commission to determine that the entities are not controlled from a third country.

In case the Work Programme imposes conditions on entities controlled from a third country and entities from associated countries those participants will be asked for guarantees approved by the eligible country in which they are established. The validity of these guarantees will be later assessed by the European Commission. The guarantee conditions are set out in the respective Work Programme.

The activation of this article will be make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

Strategic autonomy restrictions Article 18(4)

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[37] See Article 12(5) and (6) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694.

[38] Participation is further limited to associated countries that meet specific conditions. In order to be eligible, a third country must be formally associated to Digital Europe Programme and meet specific conditions (eligibility depending on the outcome of the assessment of replies to the questionnaire provided by relevant associated countries to meet these specific conditions) at the time of signature of the grant agreement.

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, calls can limit the participation to entities *established* in the EU, and/or entities established in third countries associated to the programme for EU strategic autonomy reasons[39].

The application of this article will make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

ⓘ For more information, *see Guidance on participation in DEP, HE, EDF and CEF-DIG restricted calls*.

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[39] See Article 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694.